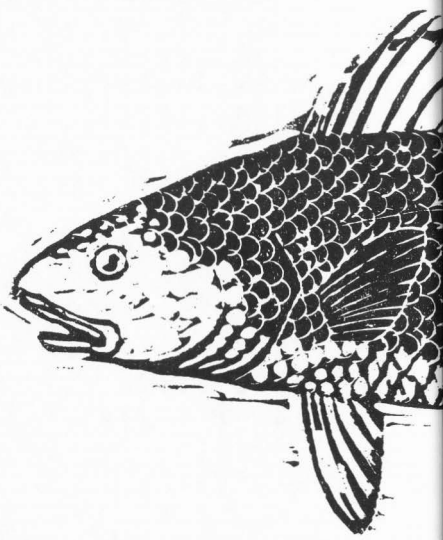
1978

I Heard the Old Fisherman Say: Folklore of the Texas Gulf Coast

Patrick B. Mullen

I Heard the Old Fishermen Say

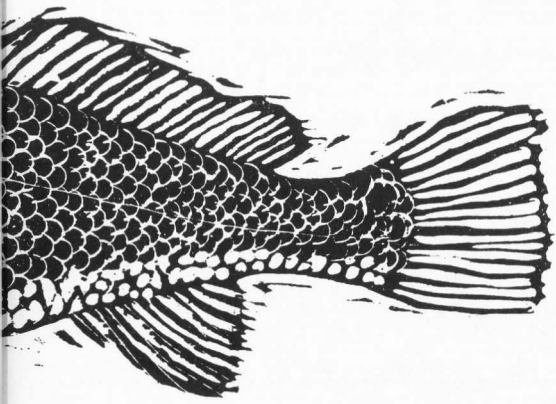
I Heard th



)ld Fishermen Say

Folklore of the Texas Gulf Coast

)y Patrick B. Mullen



Utah State University Press
Logan, Utah

The publication of this book was assisted by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the following for permission to reprint material previously published:

American Anthropological Association, for material revised and expanded from JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE 82 (325):214-225, 1969, and from JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE 84 (334):406-413, 1971.

International Society for Folk Narrative Research, for material from *Folk Narrative Research*, ed. Juha Pentikäinen and Tuula Juurikka (*Studia Fennica*, vol. 20, 1976), pp. 302-311.

Southern Folklore Quarterly, for material from *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 33(1969):80-91.

Texas Folklore Society, for material from *The Folklore of Texan Cultures*, ed. Francis Edward Abernethy (Publications of the Texas Folklore Society, no. 30, 1974), pp. 267-273.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Mullen, Patrick B., 1941-
I heard the old fishermen say: folklore of the Texas Gulf Coast / by Patrick B. Mullen. – 2nd ed.
p. cm.
Bibliography: p.
ISBN 0-87421-139-5 : $15.95
1. Fishing – Texas – Folklore. 2. Folklore – Texas. 3. Fishers – Texas – Folklore. 4. Texas – Social life and customs. I. Title. GR110.T5M84 1988
398.2'7 – dc19 88-27684
CIP

Printed in the United States of America

Second Utah State University Press Printing 1993

Reprinted by arrangement with the University of Texas Press

For my parents,
Borden C. and Lorraine Mullen,
and for my wife, Roseanne.

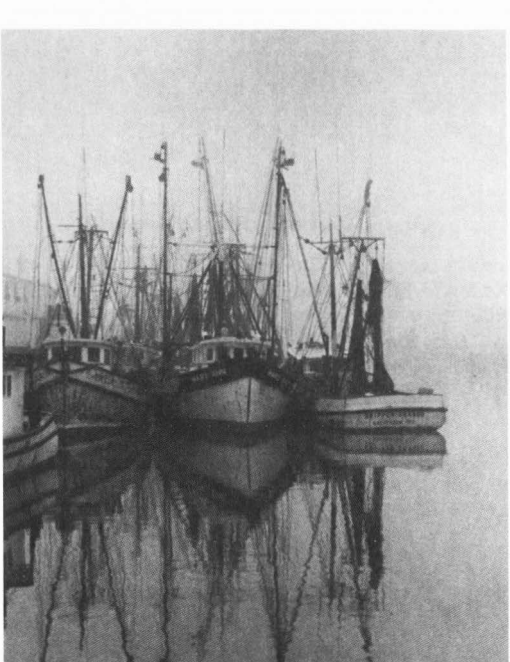


Photo by Betty Tichich. Reprinted from The Port of Galveston *by permission of Galveston County Cultural Arts Council, Inc.*

Contents

Preface to the Paperback

I Heard the Old Fishermen Say was originally published in 1978 as a description and analysis of an occupational group and a regional culture. It was not only the first scholarly book on folklore of the Texas Gulf Coast region, but was also the first scholarly book to study folk beliefs in the social and cultural context of an occupational group.

Although the first edition was not intended as a text, many folklore instructors have found it a particularly useful tool in the classroom. The book has important applications for several courses, including Introduction to Folklore, Occupational Folklore, Regional Folklore, American Folklore, and Folk Narrative. Recognizing the need for good instructional materials in the field, Utah State University Press has brought the book back into print in this paperback edition, and has produced the cassette tape, *I Heard the Old Fishermen Say: Narrative Style in Context*. The tape allows students to actually hear the stories transcribed in this book as they were told by the storytellers.

The book is based on extensive field research among commercial fishermen and other residents of the Texas Gulf Coast. The analytic focus is on various genres of folklore including folk beliefs, magic belief legends, buried treasure legends, local character anecdotes, and tall tales. The folklore is placed within the context of the lives of the people who carry on the traditions and is considered from both occupational and regional perspectives. *I Heard the Old Fishermen Say* is basically a functional study, especially in the sections on folk belief and legend, although structure is also used. The chapters on local character anecdotes, tall tales, and the storytelling style of Ed Bell concentrate on the rhetorical devices of the art of storytelling.

Some of the scholarship that has appeared in the ten years since publication, notably in occupational folklore and ethnicity, has important implications for this book. Several of the approaches and analyses in the book

can be expanded and refined by reference to these studies, making them even more effective for use in the classroom.

This book has been particularly effective for teaching the concepts of functionalism, since it contains many detailed examples of traditional superstitions within the context of fishermen's attitudes and behavior, analyzed on the basis of Malinowski's anxiety-ritual theory. This is an area in which my own presentation of the material has changed since the publication of the book. In a perceptive review of *I Heard the Old Fishermen Say* in *Western Folklore* 39 (1980), 68-70, Michael Heisley pointed out that my use of functionalism did not recognize the flaws inherent in the approach. I now indicate to students that the functional analysis of folk belief, while useful, does have limitations, and that for a full understanding of folk belief other approaches must be employed as well. Elliott Oring's "Three Functions of Folklore: Traditional Functionalism as Explanation in Folkloristics," *Journal of American Folklore* 89 (1976), 67-80, contains an excellent summary of the scholarly debate on the flaws of functionalism. What remains to be done in folk belief scholarship is a performance analysis, and Gary Butler is doing just that in his yet unpublished study of performance theory and the analysis of folk belief expression among Newfoundland fishermen.

The study of occupational folklore has expanded greatly in the last ten years. Robert H. Byington edited a special issue of *Western Folklore* entitled *Working Americans: Contemporary Approaches to Occupational Folklife* 37 (1978), which views a broad spectrum of worker's lore. In that collection of essays, Byington, Robert S. McCarl, Jr., Roger D. Abrahams, Jack Santino, and Archie Green indicated the importance of occupational technique, the work processes themselves, as part of traditional occupational life. For more about occupational technique, see Robert McCarl's *The District of Columbia Fire Fighters' Project: A Case Study in Occupational Folklife*, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985, which has theoretical implications for the study of commercial fishermen. Janet C. Gilmore's *The World of the Oregon Fishboat: A Study in Maritime Folklife*, Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1986, is an excellent recent study of a wide range of occupational life. Jack Santino's several articles and forthcoming book *Miles of Smiles, Years of Struggle: A Folklore Study of Pullman Porters*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988, show the significance of personal experience narratives to a full understanding of occupational folklore. I find it effective to combine material on Gulf of Mexico commercial fishermen with examples of the personal experience narratives of fishermen from another region, from a forthcoming book by Timothy Lloyd and myself, *In Your Blood: Traditions of Commercial Fishermen on Lake Erie.*

More recent studies on ethnicity stress its importance in determining identity and shaping folklore. An excellent collection containing a wide variety of ethnic folk beliefs is *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions: A Compendium of American Folklore*, edited by Wayland D. Hand, Anna Casetta, and Sondra D. Thiederman, Boston: G. K. Hall, 1981. After doing research for an article I wrote with Jack Shortlidge in that collection ("The Settlement and Peoples of Ohio"), a new understanding of the concept of ethnicity informs my teaching of ethnic folk belief among the Texas Gulf Coast fishermen. As studies proceed, the discipline matures and new insights become possible.

To provide a broader context for the study of ethnic folk belief, I refer my students to the following studies: Larry Danielson, ed., *Studies in Folklore and Ethnicity*, a special issue of *Western Folklore* 36 (1977); Robert A. Georges and Stephen Stern, *American and Canadian Immigrant and Ethnic Folklore: An Annotated Bibliography*, New York: Garland Publishing, 1982; Stephen Thernstrom, ed., *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980; and Anya Peterson Royce, *Ethnic Identities: Strategies for Diversity*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982.

Several scholars have commented on the analysis of buried treasure legends in Chapter Six. The concept of "limited and unlimited good" in worldviews of various cultures has been argued and expanded by Stephen Stern and Simon J. Bronner, "American Folklore vs. Folklore in America: A Fixed Fight?" *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 17 (1980), 76-84; John Lindow, "Swedish Legends of Buried Treasure," *Journal of American Folklore* 95 (1982), 257-79; and Jay Mechling, "Patois and Paradox in a Boy Scout Treasure Hunt," *Journal of American Folklore* 97 (1984), 24-42.

The local character anecdote, the subject of Chapter Seven, has remained a neglected form of folk narrative. From the evidence of my fieldwork in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina and Virginia and throughout the state of Ohio, and from the folklore field collection projects of students at Ohio State, I am convinced that local character stories are widespread, and that the most fruitful analysis is within the sociological construct of deviance.

Without a doubt, the most successful teaching materials in *I Heard the Old Fishermen Say* are the tall tales of Ed Bell in Chapter Eight. Students delight in his telling of these outrageous stories, and after listening to tapes of him, they are convinced that oral storytelling is truly an art. Since the original publication of this book, I have written another study of Ed Bell, "A Traditional Storyteller in Changing Contexts," in *And Other Neigh-*

borly Names: Social Process and Cultural Image in Texas Folklore, edited by Richard Bauman and Roger D. Abrahams, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, and use this in class to extend the discussion of Bell's narrating abilities. Also useful is the work of Richard Bauman on Ed Bell: *Story, Performance and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981; and "Ed Bell, Texas Storyteller: The Framing and Reframing of Life Experience," *Journal of Folklore Research* 24 (1987), 197-221. Bauman presents a more detailed performance analysis than appears in this book, and I now use his work and that of Barbara Babcock ("The Story in the Story: Metanarration in Folk Narrative," in *Verbal Art as Performance*, edited by Richard Bauman, Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1984, 61-79) to analyze Ed Bell's storytelling as performance.

These are the ways I have adapted this book to my teaching of folklore. I hope other folklore instructors will find this brief survey useful in using *I Heard the Old Fishermen Say* as a textbook, and that their students learn from it that folklore is a complex subject worthy of extended study. There is still a rich tradition out there waiting for them to explore.

I Heard the Old Fishermen Say

Note to the Reader

Standard references are used to annotate folklore quoted in the text. Tale type numbers refer to Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale*. Motif numbers refer to Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, and Baughman motif numbers refer to Ernest W. Baughman, *Type and Motif-Index of the Folktales of England and North America*. Brown numbers refer to Wayland D. Hand, ed., *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions from North Carolina*, vols. 6 and 7 of *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*. Magic and empirical folk beliefs listed in Appendices A and B of this book are identified in the text by numbers preceded by the symbol #.

In order to maintain the anonymity of the informants, I have used pseudonyms throughout. Only one actual name is used, that of Ed Bell, who gave his permission. All other names are omitted or changed. Field-recorded tapes are transcribed in the exact words of the informants, including pauses such as "and uh" and nonstandard grammar such as "Did you ever did it?" I have not tried to render the phonology of the dialects, since this would create difficulties in reading. I have also avoided using spellings such as "gonna" for "going to" and "kinda" for "kind of," since they suggest class and social distinctions which I do not wish to make.

Preface

I first became interested in folklore while I was an undergraduate student, and I was able to pursue this interest as a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin. Américo Paredes urged me to spend a summer collecting folklore as part of my studies, but I had no idea at the time where or what I was going to collect. Francis Abernethy, my first folklore professor, suggested that I do my field work among the fishermen on the Gulf Coast. This turned out to be an excellent suggestion. There had been no previous folklore studies of Texas coastal fishermen, and I was familiar with the area. I was born in Beaumont, which is near the Gulf, and I had lived in several towns along the coast, including Houston, Lake Jackson, Baytown, and Bay City. I was not very familiar with the fishing industry but had contacts with people who were.

In June 1967 I began my field work along the coast. I started in the Beaumont–Port Arthur–Sabine area because I knew it best. Also, this area lies on the eastern border of Texas, which was a good starting point from which to work my way southwest to the other end of the Texas coast at Port Isabel and Brownsville. In order to reach informants on the upper coast, I contacted the Beaumont *Enterprise* and *Journal* to see if they would do a story on my research. An article appeared, but I gained from it only one lead which did not relate directly to the main focus of my study.

On my first day of field research, June 12, I was accompanied by my uncle, Edgar H. Granger, Jr. He is a merchant seaman, and his family has been in the seafood restaurant business. He knew the location of the seafood buyers and distributors in Port Arthur and Sabine, and through them I contacted the first fishermen interviewed.

At first I just tried to get leads to active fishermen and did not collect any folklore. I learned a great deal about the fishing industry and the attitudes of the men toward their occupation. I viewed this as a period of getting to know the fishermen and learning about the industry. I continued

this approach for four days, and then on the fifth day I collected the first items of lore, several folk beliefs. At first I had not known what kind of folklore to look for and had asked mainly about narratives (tales, jokes, and hero legends), but this direction did not produce much response. In my field notes on June 16, 1967, I had written:

> I decided this morning that I was concentrating too heavily on folk narrative especially since there does not seem to be a strong narrative tradition among shrimpers and fishermen. So today I concentrated on the entire spectrum of folklore—belief, superstition, proverbs, omens, custom, initiation—and the search was much more fruitful.

The types I named do not actually represent the entire spectrum of folklore; most of them are related to belief lore. A few days later I realized that folk belief was the strongest area of folk tradition among the fishermen.

On that day, June 19, I made my first field recording, and I described the situation in my field notes:

> I made my first recording in the Port Arthur–Sabine area with a captain who has been in shrimping for forty years. The recording was made in his office at the docks in Port Arthur, and the interview lasted one hour. He was a very good informant because of his strong and diverse folk beliefs, especially in superstitions on shrimp boats. He firmly believed and practiced all of the superstitions he reported. This may be the strongest area of tradition among shrimpers because many of the young shrimpers follow the same practices. I will try to record young and old informants on these beliefs to see if there have been any changes.

Superstitions and related types of folklore did prove to be numerous among fishermen. As I went down the coast and interviewed more fishermen I realized that the belief lore included customs such as the blessing of the fleet, weather signs, fishing aids, and legends. I also found a strong narrative tradition, but it was in stories related to superstitions, such as legends which were based on folk beliefs.

By the time I left the Port Arthur–Sabine area and moved on to Galveston on June 20, I knew more specifically what I was looking for, but I was still open to the possibility of other kinds of folklore becoming available. I had also worked out a methodology for approaching and interviewing people and establishing new leads.

When meeting a fisherman for the first time, I would introduce myself as a student from the University of Texas who was doing research on the

traditions of the fishermen. Then I would ask if the person had time to talk to me. I had a sequence of questions in mind, but the order was flexible, and I would change it depending on the interests of the person I was interviewing. I started by asking about his personal involvement in the fishing business: how long he had been fishing, how he got started, what kind of experience he had, etc. Then, depending on his response, I would ask more personal questions about age, religion, education, and family background. Only after a discussion of this sort would I ask directly for folklore, but I would not mention the term *folklore*. I would usually ask about "things which were bad luck on a boat," and the ensuing conversation about superstitions would naturally lead into expressions of memorates, legends, weather signs, and customs. As we talked I would always attempt to get the person's degree of belief, his practice of the belief, his attitude toward the folklore, and other contextual data.

I usually wrote down the information in longhand in notebooks. I was able to get the exact wording on superstitions and other folk beliefs because they were short items. I also wrote down short legends in longhand. If the person knew longer narratives, then I would ask permission to record him. Copies of field tapes are in the Folklore Archives at the University of Texas. Interviews ranged in length from fifteen minutes to three hours; taping sessions usually lasted between one and three hours. The people who were recorded did not seem to mind the microphone and recorder, and those who were nervous about it at first got used to it within a few minutes.

The circumstances of the interviews and recordings varied. Many times I met fishermen on their boats and interviewed them in the cabin, on deck, on the dock, in a nearby warehouse, or in a net shop. Other times they were busy when I first contacted them, and we would arrange to meet at their homes, where I would interview them at the kitchen table or in the living room. I met some of the fishermen in bars and other shrimpers' hangouts but did not conduct many interviews there because noise level and surrounding activity were too distracting. Some interviews were done in places where other people were present, such as bait shops, fish houses, and fishing equipment stores. Public places like these seemed more conducive to story-telling sessions (see Chapter 8).

When ending an interview I would always ask for the names of fishermen who might help in my research. Most fishermen gave me at least three or four names, some in their own community and others in shrimp ports down the coast. Thus, I had a list of people to contact in every new town. When I reached people I had been referred to I would open by saying, "So-and-

so from Port Arthur recommended that I talk to you." Mentioning the name of a friend would make the person open up immediately, and the interview usually progressed smoothly from there.

Nearly all the fishermen I talked to were very friendly and helpful. On a few occasions they were too busy to talk to me, but only once was a man so suspicious of me that he refused to talk at all. People invited me into their homes, gave me coffee, fed me, and generally helped me in any way they could. A few were reluctant to talk about their personal lives, but most were willing to reveal their educational background, religion, and family history.

My experiences in each port tended to be similar, since I was following a methodology worked out in the field. The time I spent in each community depended on the number of people I was able to contact who had traditional knowledge. I spent one week in the Port Arthur–Sabine area, working from about nine in the morning until from five to nine at night. The next port was Galveston, where I stayed almost two weeks (June 20–June 30), with a one-day trip back to Sabine (June 28). I took a week off and then returned to Sabine and Galveston for one day each (July 8 and 10). On July 11 I began field work in Freeport and completed a total of six days there (July 11–15, 26).

I spent the rest of July interviewing people in the fishing towns between Freeport and Aransas Pass. I talked mainly to bay fishermen in Matagorda, Palacios, Port Lavaca, and Indianola. By the beginning of August I had reached the small bay fishing communities of Port O'Connor, Seadrift, and Fulton. Next I spent a total of six days in the large shrimp port of Aransas Pass (August 2–3, 8–9, 15–16). My field work ended in Brownsville and Port Isabel, where I collected for four days (August 18–21). I returned to Port Arthur–Sabine for two weeks in the fall of 1967, to the entire coast for a month in the summer of 1971, and to Galveston and Freeport for ten days in December 1975.

My field trips produced a wealth of folklore and contextual information, more than enough for a thorough in-depth analysis of fishermen's folk traditions on the Texas Gulf Coast. However, some of the circumstances of the collecting place limits on the extent of the analysis. For instance, I was able to observe work on the boats at the docks on many occasions, but I had only one opportunity to observe everyday work habits on an actual fishing voyage. I wanted to take a two-week trip on a shrimp boat, but various problems arose which prevented this. Also, I made no attempt at interviewing a statistical cross section of fishermen. I was mainly interested in collecting folklore, and this led me to the tradition-bearers in the group, who may not be representative of the majority of fishermen. Since I was

interested in superstitions, I tended to spend more time with people who were superstitious. Their high degree of belief in superstitions may not be the same as that of others in the group, but I am convinced that fishermen are more superstitious than most other occupational groups, and this study will attempt to explain why.

In attempting to understand this body of folklore and the group from which it comes, I have used many different approaches from anthropology, sociology, psychology, and literature. Some of the approaches have been used before to analyze folklore; others are new. The anxiety-ritual theory from anthropology has often been related to the study of magic and superstitious behavior. However, the sociological study of deviant behavior has not been applied to local character anecdotes before. The rhetorical study of point of view and narrative persona has been widely used to analyze written fiction, but it has not been used to interpret the oral style of tall tales. I sometimes used one approach for a particular genre of folklore, as in analyzing the buried treasure legends from the perspective of anthropological worldview. Other times I used several different methods on one genre. For instance, I studied the structure, transmission, and function of folk belief.

A few basic principles unify these diverse approaches. This study is basically functional and contextual. I wanted to know what purposes the folklore serves in the lives of the people I interviewed. How is the folklore used and what does it mean to the people who use it? The focus is on the folklore as it functions within a particular society and culture. In order to understand the function of folklore, it is essential to know as much as possible about the context in which it occurs. Thus, I have included information on the geographical and historical background of commercial fishing and specific facts about the fishermen's social situation. I have tried to analyze the relationships of folklore and behavior, asking not just whether a person knows superstitions but whether he practices them and in what circumstances. I collected texts of folk narratives and I also gathered information about the situations in which those narratives are told in order to determine how they function for the individual and the group.

Acknowledgments

Because I have been working on this study since 1967, there are many people to thank. The ones who helped me begin the research deserve special acknowledgment: Francis E. Abernethy, Edgar H. Granger, Jr., and Robert K. Hanson. The director of my dissertation at the University of Texas at Austin, Américo Paredes, gave me early encouragement and advice. The other members of my dissertation committee, Robert H. Wilson, William H. Goetzmann, and the late Mody C. Boatright, were also very helpful. Caroline Bearse Bakes assisted with the early stages of the manuscript.

The later stages of researching and writing were facilitated by grants from the College of Humanities of The Ohio State University. My colleagues in the Department of English were very supportive. I especially wish to thank Roseanne Rini, Daniel R. Barnes, and Robert Jones, who read and commented on the entire book. Madeleine T. Barnes, William E. Lightfoot, Jean MacLaughlin, and Dennis Preston discussed various aspects of the book with me. Barbara Austin typed the final draft. Archie Green read the manuscript for the University of Texas Press and made some valuable suggestions.

I would also like to thank Betty Tichich, of Galveston, for permitting the use of her photographs in the book.

Many people aided me in the field collecting on the Gulf Coast. My parents, Borden C. and Lorraine Mullen, provided a home for me during many of my trips. Also helpful in this way were David and Marcia Mullen, Robert and Linda Katz, Willard and Hally Sullivan, Ocie Vick, Monnie and Edgar Granger, J. E. King, Geraldine Livengood, the late Mrs. B. L. Livengood, and many other friends and relatives along the coast. And, of course, the fishermen gave freely of their time and their knowledge so that this book could be written.

P.B.M.

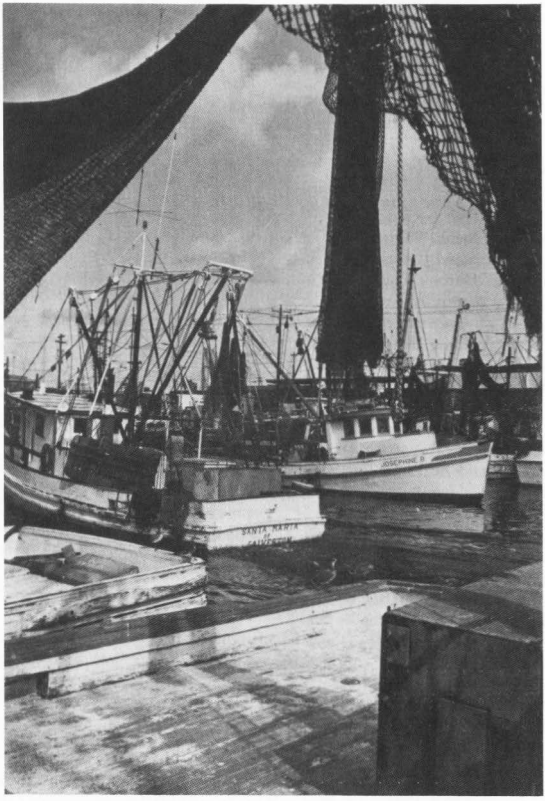


Photo by Betty Tichich.

Introduction: The Context of Fishermen's Folklore

The Social and Cultural Context

Today along the Texas coastline of the Gulf of Mexico there exist two groups of commercial fishermen: bay fishermen and Gulf or sea fishermen. Gulf fishermen venture far out into the open sea, but bay fishermen stay within the confines of coastal estuaries. Each group has maintained strong and distinct folk traditions. Sea fishermen's folklore is part of an ancient, world-wide occupational tradition of the sea, while bay fishermen's lore is more concerned with the specific region of the Texas Gulf Coast. The folklore of both groups reflects the values, strengths, and anxieties of the people and their cultures. I have collected folklore from fishermen on the Texas coast since 1967, and in this book I shall present their folklore and analyze its meaning within its social and cultural context.

Sea fishermen would be easy to romanticize, because they have qualities which have long been idealized in American culture. The romance of the sea as depicted in American literature and popular culture is part of this appeal. Gulf fishermen are independent and freedom-loving; most of them choose to earn their living by fishing so that they will not be tied down to factory or office jobs. They work close to nature and face many physical hazards at sea. In this they are similar to other romantic folk groups in America, such as lumberjacks, railroad engineers, and miners. Despite the veil of romance through which we usually view such occupations, the reality of the danger, individualism, and freedom of their jobs cannot be denied. The folklore of sea fishermen on the Texas coast can be understood only within the context of these realities. Their folk beliefs and magic legends are inextricably connected with the dangers and uncertainties of their jobs, and the maintenance of their beliefs and legends in the face of society's disapproval is a reflection of their individualism and freedom.

Bay fishermen are also independent and free from time clocks and

bosses, but they do not face the same physical risks as sea fishermen. They fish within the relative safety of the bays, never confronting the hazards of the open sea. Their folklore overlaps with that of sea fishermen to a certain extent, but the major forms of their folklore, buried treasure legends, local character anecdotes, and tall tales, are not shared with seamen; rather they are tied to the Texas coastal region. Thus, this book is divided into two sections, the first dealing mainly with the occupational traditions of sea fishermen, and the second with the regional folklore of bay fishermen. Before this material can be analyzed, it is necessary to give some general cultural and social information about fishermen.

With all of the technological aids available in modern corporate sea fishing, it is still basically an elemental endeavor which pits one man or a small group of men against all of the hazards and uncertainties of the sea. Statistics on a national basis indicate that fishing is one of the most hazardous occupations; 21.4 deaths per million man-days occurred in commercial fisheries in the United States in 1965, as compared to 8.3 deaths per million man-days in coal mining.[1] As A. W. Moffett, a marine biologist, points out:

> The shrimper's life is far from easy. Fishermen are incessantly exposed to all of the perils of the sea, and often sail far from home in search of shrimp. When catches off the Texas coast decline, many travel to the distant Bay of Campeche near Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, where the Mexican government now claims fishing jurisdiction out to twelve miles from shore. American shrimpers trawling within these limits have been exposed to gunfire, fined, and had their boats and equipment seized. The Campeche trips may last fifty or sixty days and are usually made during winter, when sudden storms are frequent.[2]

The testimony of the fishermen confirms the dangers of their life. One captain said, "Anything can happen on board them boats while they're working, boom can break or they can sink and get drowned." The same man described his experience of losing a deckhand at sea: "That happens every once in awhile. They'll lose a man overboard, and that's it, he's gone! I lost a man overboard off Port Isabel. We even had a line on him. In fact, he drowned right in my arms; it was so goddamn rough." Several fishermen told me of losing their own relatives. "I got two brothers and a nephew drowned off a shrimp boat." The brothers were thirteen and nineteen, and the nephew was twenty. Other men told of close calls. One man said a butane bottle exploded on his brother's boat. "He had made a good trip, and he was ready to come in, and the ship blew up; lost the shrimp and the boat." Several fishermen told of personal clashes with Mexican gun-

boats while fishing at Campeche. Nearly every Gulf fisherman I talked to had some story about the hazards of fishing.

When a boat is at sea, sudden squalls can come up with no warning. Even with modern weather reports, shrimpers have been caught out during hurricanes. One typical experience was told by a man who is now running a research boat on one-day trips: "I got in a blow in '56 in Vera Cruz that took the starch out of me. And I've had respect for the weather since then." The storm had ninety-mile-per-hour winds and did $7,000 damage to his boat, but the most harrowing part of the experience for him was that one of his men accidentally cut the arteries of his arm during the storm and almost bled to death before they could get back to land. "I'm not too religious a man, but I prayed for that boy. And he stopped bleeding. You can take it for what it's worth."

The strain on men who are out at sea for long periods of time is often too much for them to take. One experienced captain told me, "I've seen men lose their mind on the boat. They never been to sea. They get so scared they just lose their head." While I was researching in Galveston, a man went out of his head on a shrimp boat and jumped overboard while no one was looking. The shrimpers later picked his body up in their nets. I heard many stories about men who died or were killed at sea and whose bodies were dumped over the side in order to avoid time-consuming investigations. The others would simply say they had fallen overboard and disappeared. I also heard stories of boats springing leaks far out in the Gulf and sinking or barely making it back to port. Several men told of waterspouts hitting their boats and tearing them up, and many others spoke of engine breakdowns and explosions at sea. One man who is now a prominent fish-house owner in Galveston was caught in a severe storm when he was young. The boat was disabled, and the fishermen could not get back in; by the time the Coast Guard found them and towed them in, the newspaper headlines told of their death at sea, and they walked into a house full of mourners.

The everyday activities of fishing at sea are also dangerous and frustrating. I was struck by the large number of fishermen who had lost fingers, hands, or arms in pursuing their occupation, and the fishermen were well aware of this hazard: "The other day a man got his hand cut off on the cable off Galveston." Pulling in nets and the heavy wooden "doors" which weigh the nets down can be hazardous if a fisherman is not quick to move his hands. I met one deckhand who had an infected foot from stepping on a catfish gill on the boat, a rather common occurrence. If a fisherman is not careful, the acidlike liquid given off by shrimp can eat the flesh from his hands. Nets and rigs can be torn up by sharks or an uneven sea bottom.

Often nets are lost completely, and there is nothing to do but return to the docks with no fish and no hopes of any. Many similar hazardous and fruitless experiences could be enumerated because all of the Gulf fishermen freely talked of like occurrences.

Gulf fishing, especially shrimping, is also an uncertain economic endeavor. As Moffett says, "Although production is high, the shrimp supply is unstable, and often the industry cannot fill the demand."[3] The testimony of the shrimpers supports this contention. Some typical remarks of the shrimpers are "It's either feast or famine" and "It's a gamble." On a field trip in 1971 I asked the shrimpers about the economic stability of their occupation, and all of them emphasized that it fluctuates a great deal. One ex-captain who now manages a fish house said a boat owner could make $50,000–$60,000 in a good year, but in a bad year he "might go in the hole." Many associated shrimping with gambling: "This is just like a gamble." Also I noticed several boats named *The Gambler*. One older captain said, "Sometimes they don't make no money at all," and his son interjected, "It's a chance you take." Some were more negative than others. One captain said, "There are no positives in this business. Everything is played by ear, hour to hour, day to day. There's no security in it at all. There are too many variables, every aspect." His attitude is an extreme one, but every shrimper would agree that fishing is economically uncertain. "One time you got a pocketful of money; next time you're starving to death." There were several poor years of shrimping before 1964, but in 1965 and after, a new cycle of bumper catches ensued. Several of the men I talked to had quit shrimping because it nearly bankrupted them. Now, of course, others are making fortunes shrimping, but prosperous men are also pessimistic. The big shrimping corporations have absorbed many small operators, and other small independent shrimpers have formed co-operatives in order to make a profit during the lean years.

Danger and economic uncertainty are the most important factors in analyzing fishermen's folklore, but other cultural patterns are also significant. For instance, ethnicity is an influence on the folklore of some fishermen. The majority of the fishermen on the Texas coast have an Anglo-Saxon background, but there are also many minority ethnic groups represented. A large group of Italian-American sea and bay fishermen live in Galveston; a community of black fishermen operate out of Sabine. These are the only cohesive ethnic groups among the fishermen; the others are spread out and live among the majority. Several Portuguese-American fishermen live on the Texas coast; many fishermen of Scandinavian origin now fish in Texas. Several Yugoslavian-Americans live and work out of Freeport and Aransas Pass. Many Mexican-Americans work on the boats

on the lower Texas coast, and French-speaking Cajuns from Louisiana have migrated into Texas to fish. The fisherman's life establishes an overall pattern which transcends any specific ethnic group. The blacks, Italian-Americans, and other minority groups work in essentially the same way as the majority group.

However, there is a difference in the biographies of the sea and the bay fishermen which is important in analyzing their different traditions. Most of both kinds of fishermen reported fairly complete biographical information, although some were contacted for such a brief period of time that it was impossible to gather biographical data from them. Most of the sea fishermen I interviewed were born out of state, while most of the bay fishermen were born in Texas. None of the bay fishermen were foreign-born, but many Gulf fishermen were. The Gulf fishermen had usually come to Texas from Florida, Louisiana, Georgia, or Alabama, but a few had come from Kansas, New York, Maine, Minnesota, Connecticut, and Michigan. With the exception of Kansas, all of these states have commercial fisheries, and most of the informants had been fishing commercially before they migrated to Texas. Both Gulf and bay fishermen have lived in fishing environments nearly all their lives.

An interesting migratory pattern can be detected in the movements of sea fishermen into Texas. The biggest influx of shrimpers into the state came after World War II, from 1945 to 1955, when many of the informants migrated to Texas. Most of them came from Louisiana but were originally from Florida. They had moved to Louisiana between 1935 and 1940. The explanation they all offered for this pattern was that the shrimp grounds played out first in Florida and then in Louisiana, and they moved to "follow the shrimp." Several informants migrated to Texas before 1945, and these also moved for economic reasons; better profits could be made in Texas. The big migrations seem to be over, since none of the informants came to Texas after 1955.

The educational level of bay and Gulf fishermen is limited; most had from seven to nine years of schooling. One elderly man explained why so many dropped out of school at an early age: "That day and time they didn't think much of school." Most boys went to work on the boats helping their fathers. Several people were hesitant to give out information on education, and I did not pursue it. Religion was another area which many were reluctant to speak about. Most fishermen were Protestant, but there were also many Catholics among Gulf fishermen because of the presence of traditionaly Catholic ethnic groups.

Traditionaly, commercial fishing has been a masculine endeavor, and this is still true today. At a time when women are entering occupations

which used to be exclusively male, the fishing industry on the Texas coast has resisted female incursions. In all my field work on the coast, I heard of only two women working on fishing boats, and they were the subjects of character anecdotes because they were thought to be eccentric. This pattern of female exclusion is perpetuated because the labor force in the fishing industry is not organized. Anyone wishing to work on a boat has to approach an individual captain. A person can also enter the fishing industry by buying a boat, and there may be women boat owners, but I have no information about this.

Most of the men I had interviewed were married and had children. Many were from fishing families and had followed their fathers into fishing, but their sons in general are not carrying on the family fishing tradition. The average age of Gulf informants was the late fifties, and of bay fishermen the middle sixties. Older men were usually more knowledgeable about fishing traditions, so I concentrated on them. Also, elderly men were more available for long periods of interviewing. I collected during times of fishing activity, and the young men were often busy. Older captains could take time off to talk while their young hands finished the work. Many older men were retired or working on land and could be interviewed while they were mending nets or repairing equipment. The age of the informants indicates long experience in fishing; most of them began fishing in their teens and had over thirty years' experience.

All of the Gulf informants were active fishermen at one time, even though many are now involved in land jobs connected with fishing. Most of them are shrimpers, since shrimp are at this time the predominant commercial catch in the Gulf of Mexico. Several are sport fishing guides who captain "party boats," and a few fish for red snapper, a popular food fish. One group fishes for pogie or menhaden, a fish used only for industrial purposes (see Chapter 5). Many of the fishermen I talked to on the Gulf own one or more boats; about half of these captains also run the boats they own. Some men are now retired but actively fished at one time. The owners and captains are generally solid members of the town community who live in moderately expensive middle- and upper-middle-class homes. The deckhands are usually itinerant, and many are thought of as "winos." Getting good crews is a problem for most of the captains. Since the work is hard and dangerous, workers are hard to find. There are no labor unions, and the captains have to take any drifters who come along. Often these are criminals or alcoholics who cause trouble on board. Near every wharf is an area of cheap bars and hotels which deckhands, dock workers, and some captains frequent. The owners of boats usually do not mix socially with the deckhands and workers. The captains who do not own boats are a class

between boat owners and deckhands. They are not as well-off economically as the owners, but they are not social misfits like many of the deckhands. I interviewed only a few deckhands. Thus most of the informants are of a high status within the fishing community.

The bay fishermen had experience with several types of fishing. They usually had net fished for seafood, shrimped either for bait or seafood, oystered, and served as sport fishing guides. One informant said that in order to make a living in the bays a fisherman has to try several different kinds of fishing. Several of the bay fishermen own and fish from their own boats. Others own either a fish house, a bait stand, a boat repair shop, or a net shop. Some are retired from active fishing. Most of the bay fishermen interviewed are small, independent, self-employed operators.

A bay fisherman usually lives in a small bay community where most of the other inhabitants are also connected with fishing in some way. He makes one-day trips out into the bay for fish. A fisherman goes out by himself or with one other person, perhaps a son, on his own small boat. Normally he is within sight of land, since he trawls in shallow waters. He fishes all day and comes back about sunset. He can generally see squalls coming and head for land in time, but good weather is important for productive fishing. Although there is not a large profit in bay fishing, it is a steady source of income. If one kind of fishing is in a decline, a bay fisherman simply switches to something else. In a single year he may fish for snappers, gig for flounder, gather oysters, and drag for shrimp.

All of this social and occupational background has a definite bearing on the traditions and beliefs of the fisherman, both bay and Gulf. The fact that so many Gulf fishermen were born out of Texas and even out of the United States indicates a tie with older fishing communities. These men were influenced by fishing traditions in their original homes, and they in turn brought traditional beliefs and lore of the sea with them to Texas. Since most of the bay fishermen were born in Texas, they did not have this strong direct influence coming from outside. There has been some contact between bay and Gulf fishermen, but generally they operate in separate spheres so that their traditions have crossed over only in a limited way. The sea fishermen have sometimes influenced the bay fishermen, but the belief traditions of the open sea were not really accepted by bay fishermen; they have heard of some of them, but they do not usually follow or believe them.

The narrative traditions were different among bay and sea fishermen. The belief legends which were closely connected to superstitions were more widely known among sea fishermen. The few bay fishermen who knew these legends did not believe them (see Chapter 2). However, the

bay fishermen had a stronger tradition of buried treasure legends, while Gulf fishermen knew only a few (see Chapter 6). Both groups knew local character anecdotes. The Gulf fishermen told stories about eccentric fishermen in their home ports, but the most interesting cycle of local character anecdotes was told by bay fishermen (see Chapter 7). The tall tales are unique in that they are not associated with either bay or Gulf fishing; they are part of the tradition of one man who is a bay fisherman (see Chapter 8). He is one of those rare storytellers who has maintained the art and tradition of long fictional oral narratives.

The strongest kind of folklore among fishermen on the Gulf Coast is folk belief, including magic superstition, weather signs, fishing aids, and customs. I collected folk beliefs from bay and sea fishermen, but the sea fishermen definitely have more superstitions and stronger belief in them than bay fishermen.

The moderate level of education of both Gulf and bay fishermen may make them more susceptible than most people to folk belief, but I rather doubt it. I believe that this susceptibility can be explained by factors other than education. Religion also seems to be a negligible factor as a basic explanation for folk belief among fishermen. Protestants and Catholics equally reported strong occupational beliefs. There are a few important individual beliefs and customs associated with Catholicism: the blessing of the fleet, carrying of religious medals on sea journeys, and hanging a cross in the cabin of a boat. Protestants have accepted the blessing of the fleet and take part in it every year, and some Protestants even carry religious medals.

The strong family ties of most fishermen are important as a background for their beliefs. They have families to support; fishing is a livelihood, not just a pastime. Their responsibility to their families helps determine the cultural values within which their beliefs are framed. Also important in framing their cultural values is their firm standing in the surrounding non-fishing community. The boat owners and captains are especially influenced by the society they live in. But ultimately, of course, they are all independent individuals because of the nature of their occupation. The fact that many of the informants are second-generation fishermen means that their beliefs are not usually newly acquired; rather, they are often ingrained in them from childhood. That many of their sons are going into other occupations could mean that the fishing traditions may be weakened and eventually die out. But somehow the folk belief of fishermen has withstood greater social upheaval than this in the past.

The older age and the long years of experience of the informants are an indication that traditions have to be acquired over many years of life in

ler to be assimilated. Many of the younger men that I talked to scoffed raditional folk beliefs of all kinds. Some young men reluctantly adtted they practiced superstitions, and it may be that as they grow older ey will become more dependent on magic. The older men generally beved in the traditions, although there were many skeptics even among em. The older men call upon their experiences as evidence for many of e folk beliefs. They have seen bad luck result from broken taboos and d weather come after a certain sign.

The different types of fishing activities in the Gulf generally seem to ve no bearing on traditions. The shrimp, snapper, and pogie fishermen are the same folk beliefs. Sport fishing guides have gained their knowlge of traditional fishing beliefs from having previously worked as comercial fishermen. The weekend sport fishermen are not even aware of ese traditional beliefs. The commercial fisherman's folk beliefs are an clusively occupational tradition. Bay fishermen borrow many techniques om sea fishermen, so that the types of fishing are similar, but there are her basic differences which keep them separate.

In the description of occupational life the great difference between the pen sea and bay fishermen is apparent. The Gulf fisherman tells stories f hazardous adventures at sea; this type of story is conspicuously missing om the folklore of the bay fisherman. The Gulf fisherman faces uncerainties in his efforts to make profitable catches; the bay fisherman has a teady moderate income. The bay fisherman leads a relatively safe and ertain existence following his trade, but the Gulf fisherman is constantly aced with physical dangers, natural hazards, and psychological frustraions. Both can be better understood within the general context of the eography and oral history of the Gulf Coast.

The Geographical and Historical Context

Commercial fishing on a large scale was not instituted on the Texas coast until the nineteenth century, and the current largest commercial fishery, shrimping, was not begun until the twentieth century. The Texas coastline is well suited for many types of fishing. Moffett describes it as being "approximately 375 miles long. From Sabine Lake south through Corpus Christi Bay it is characterized by large estuaries (zones where river water meets and dilutes sea water), while the remaining coast is a long, narrow lagoon called the Laguna Madre. . . . The total estuarine area and coastal lagoon incases 2,100 square miles."[4] This geography dictates the two basic types of fishing, bay and sea.

All the fishing ports on the Texas coast are within the estuaries or lagoons, but the Gulf ports have close access to the open sea. The Gulf ports are often also centers of bay fishing, but usually bay and Gulf fishing are two separate endeavors with different personnel and boats. The major Gulf ports are larger than the bay ports and include Port Arthur, Galveston, Freeport, Aransas Pass, Corpus Christi, Brownsville, and Port Isabel. Some smaller Gulf fishing centers are Sabine, Bolivar, Palacios, Port Lavaca, and Port O'Connor. Some small bay towns are Matagorda, Indianola, Seadrift, and Fulton. One town, Port Aransas, is primarily a sport fishing resort although most of the other ports have like facilities. The Gulf ports are bases for Texas fishermen and harbors for many out-of-state boats. The bay ports are mainly used by local boats. Both types of harbor have fish markets, but the Gulf ports have many large fish-buying concerns that sell fish and shrimp all over the world.

There are no published sources on the history of fishing on the Gulf Coast of Texas, but older Gulf fishermen have a knowledge of oral history which I have drawn upon for the following account. Bay fishing was at first carried out for local sales and consumption, and even today the bay fishermen sell most of their catch in the immediate home area. The first settlers on the coast had not previously been fishermen, but took up fishing after they arrived. Most of the settlers came to the coast to farm or raise cattle and fished only part-time. One of the first fishing activities to become commercially profitable was oystering, and most of the present bay fishermen oystered earlier in their careers. As the population grew, especially around Port Arthur, Galveston, Houston, and Corpus Christi, restaurants and cafés opened and provided a market for flounder, redfish, and other seafoods. As sport fishing became popular, a small important industry developed to provide bait. Many bay fishermen are now mainly concerned with catching shrimp to be used as bait. Commercial shrimping is the newest fishery to open in the bays. Before World War I there was no market for shrimp because not many people ate them. Between 1917 and 1920 a market developed as shrimp became a popular food. Usually the same men who had been fishing in the bays tried shrimping, found it successful, and converted to it.

The history of Gulf fishing is much more complicated, since it is not really a local development but an outgrowth of commercial fishing in Florida and on the East Coast. The first important type of commercial deep-sea fishing in Texas was for red snapper, which is still sold commercially and distributed widely. Snapper fishing came to Texas from Florida, and during the 1930's it had its greatest success. Now there are few Texas

snapper boats, but many boats from Florida still dock in Texas, where they either sell their fish or load them on refrigerated trucks which carry them back to Florida. Menhaden fish, better known as pogies to the fishermen, are processed at a plant into fertilizer, fish oil, and a meat additive for poultry and livestock feed. Menhaden fishing is one of the newest types of commercial fishing in Texas. The only Texas menhaden fishery is located in Sabine in the southeast corner of the state; it began operation around 1950, but menhaden fishing has existed on the Atlantic coast since 1880.[5] This industry is one of the most profitable forms of fishing.

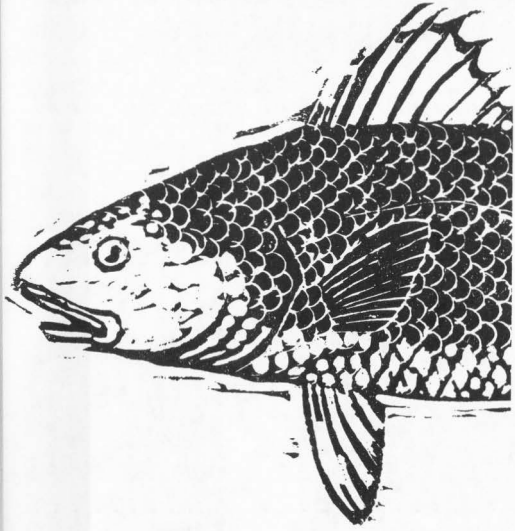
Shrimping is the largest fishing industry in the Gulf of Mexico. More shrimp boats tie up at Texas ports than any other type of fishing vessel, and more and larger shrimp buying and processing houses exist on the Texas coast than any other type of fishing concern. As Moffett points out, "In 1965, these men landed over 77 million pounds of shrimp in Texas, worth over $31 million."[6] The history of shrimping in Texas is mainly the history of the expansion of Eastern fisheries to Texas. The techniques and procedures of shrimping were not known by Texas fishermen; more experienced hands from Florida had to come into the state, bringing their knowledge and skills with them. This took place after World War I; about 1917 the first commercial shrimping in Texas started in the Galveston area. By 1930 commercial shrimping had spread down the entire Texas coast with transient fishermen from other states passing on their techniques. Local fishermen gradually attempted shrimping when the profits were shown to be worthwhile.

As early as 1922 there was a cannery at Bolivar near Galveston to process shrimp. A freezer was built at Galveston in 1928, and this greatly facilitated the processing. There was a continual influx of Florida, Georgia, Alabama, and Louisiana shrimpers into Texas during the 1920's and 1930's. Some came for just part of the season, but others established residence in Texas. Conflicts arose between the state of Texas and out-of-state fishermen who shrimped in Texas waters, but these conflicts were settled by court decisions. The growth of the shrimp industry boomed after World War II, and out-of-state shrimpers continued to come into Texas at an even greater rate during the late 1940's and early 1950's. More of these fishermen chose to stay in Texas as the Eastern shrimp grounds began to play out. There are now signs that the Texas shrimp grounds are on the decline, and shrimpers are beginning to look to Mexico and South America for new fishing grounds. The Campeche area off the coast of Mexico has been actively fished by United States fishermen since the early 1950's.

This geographical and historical information has a direct influence on

the traditional beliefs of coastal fishermen. The geographical division of the coast into estuaries and open seas means that the two types of fishing have two different traditions. The isolation of bay fishing from historical developments of open sea fishing indicates that the two traditions have not had much opportunity to influence each other. The influx of fishermen from the East, which was the primary historical feature of sea fishing in Texas, suggests that the folk beliefs of the migratory fishermen will be found to have influenced those of the Texas coast.

PART ONE. OCCUPATIONAL FOLKLORE



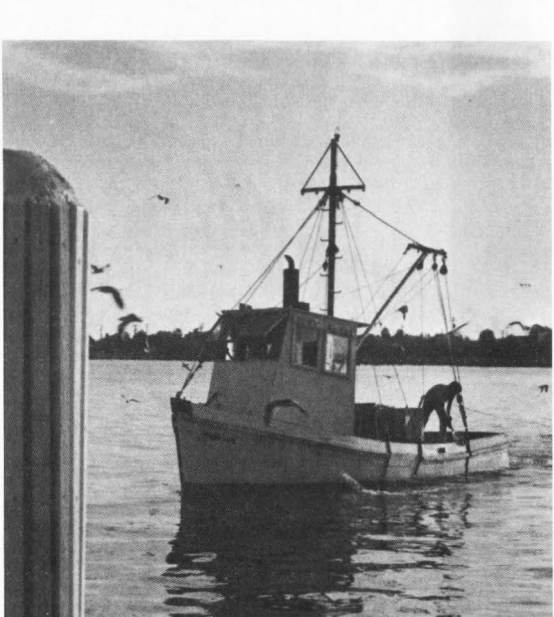


Photo by Betty Tichich.

1. Magic Beliefs

Superstitions are part of the everyday lives of sea fishermen on the Texas Gulf Coast, and this is reflected in their conversations. While waiting in their boats or on the docks for a change in the weather in order to go fishing, they talk about their own encounters with bad luck, or they swap stories about superstitious behavior among other fishermen. I talked about superstitions with Captain Dan Hollowell of Galveston one afternoon on his boat, the *Donald Duck*. He had just returned from a trip out in the Gulf and was waiting for the shrimp to be unloaded so that he could go home. He is a big burly man with a gruff voice and a good sense of humor. His conversation was sprinkled with jokes and humorous remarks. He told me about a superstitious captain he once worked for.

> There's one particular guy I'm talking about, his name is Salty Carl. He's from Brownsville. I'm sitting back on the deck one day; we were running down south, and uh—he's sitting back there sewing net, and he came on back there, and he's standing on the hatch, and he looks at me and says, "Have you completely gone crazy?" I said, "What do you mean gone crazy? I don't understand what you're talking about." And it was rough, you know, a southeaster was blowing. And he said, "You've whistled in the wind. And if you hadn't whistled, this wind wouldn't a blowed." And he turned around and went back to the dock, and I got fired.

Dan laughed at the end of the story, but he later admitted that he had superstitions of his own. Many fishermen believe that whistling on board can cause bad luck (# 2), and others think it causes the wind to blow (# 106). The stories fishermen tell about superstitious people often mention that a deckhand was fired for breaking a traditional taboo, so Salty Carl's behavior is not unusual.

The fishermen have a wide range of belief in superstitions, from total

acceptance to total rejection. Many of them have attitudes which fall between these two extremes. Jim Hardy, an active shrimper for years who now works on land, is one of those who questions the superstitions. I talked to him in a warehouse at the docks in Aransas Pass while he was mending nets. He told me of an experience he had with a taboo against turning the hatch cover on a boat upside down.

> I was loading ice, threw the hatches off, and one of them flipped over on the deck. My brother came down and told me to never let that happen again, that that damn boat was going to sink. The next night it did. Where he got it from I don't know; that was the first I heard of it. It was just one of them things that happened. Coincidence. (# 1)

Jim explains the bad luck as coincidence, but many fishermen see a connection between the breaking of a taboo and the bad luck that follows.

Doc Moots, an older fisherman from Port Isabel, is one of the believers. As he and his wife and I sat in his home one night drinking coffee, he related some of his experiences which led him to accept certain superstitions.

> I never did like nobody to say "alligator" on board. That's something that you heard, and it seems like every time that I was ever on a boat and anybody said it on there, I'd go out and tear my net or just something or another would go wrong. And I just figured I'd just rather have that said somewheres else and not on the boat. It just stayed with me.... (# 57)

Saying "alligator" is traditionally taboo among Gulf fishermen; I collected this belief from twenty fishermen on the Texas coast. Doc's personal experience has proved the belief to his satisfaction.

The alligator, hatch cover, and whistling superstitions are all examples of magic beliefs. The other large category of folk belief among Texas coastal fishermen is empirical belief and includes weather signs and fishing aids; these will be discussed in Chapter 3. Magic beliefs are found mainly among sea fishermen and include taboos, omens, good-luck devices and customs, control devices and aids, and several miscellaneous beliefs. *Magic* and *empirical* are contextual categories, since they are based on the attitudes of fishermen. Magic beliefs have no rational explanation in the fishermen's minds; these are the practices that seem to be based on some mysterious element ordinarily beyond human control. Most often they deal with fate or chance and the good or bad luck resulting from certain actions or lack of actions. There seems to be no logical connection between whistling or saying "alligator" and the bad luck that follows; some supernatural force seems to be the cause. Because of their irrationality, magic

beliefs are thought of by the fishermen as superstitions. They realize that a rational, scientific society rejects magic, but, though they are hesitant to admit it, they still believe in and practice it to a certain extent. Following a description of a magic belief, fishermen often make some remark such as "I don't believe in none of that." They preface many of the statements of magic with "Some people say . . ." or, "I heard the old fishermen say that . . ." in an attempt to avoid personal identification with magic.

Magic and empirical beliefs fit Alan Dundes' structural definition of superstitions as "traditional expressions of one or more conditions and one or more results with some of the conditions signs and others causes."[1] These elements of form are constant, although the content changes. The relationship between condition and result in magic beliefs is usually causal; the condition causes or brings about the result. For example, bringing a black suitcase on board a boat (the condition) causes bad luck (the result) (# 35). Magic rituals are attempts by man to control and understand the aleatory element in nature which cannot be explained or handled by rational technology or science. Usually, then, magic beliefs call upon supernatural explanations and controls for natural occurrences. What modern people most often call superstitions, anthropologists who study primitive culture call magic belief and ritual. Magic belief and ritual are closely related by similar function in both primitive and modern societies. Thus, when anthropologists speak of the function of ritual or belief, their statements have relevance to modern as well as primitive people. Anthony F. C. Wallace's definition of technological rituals, rituals which are "intended to control various aspects of nature, other than man himself, for the purpose of human exploitation," is also appropriate as a definition for the magic beliefs of fishermen.[2] One type of technological ritual is the rite of protection, used to prevent or avoid ills or disasters. Coastal fishermen have many rites of protection because there is a need for protective measures which rational technology only partially fulfills.

Inherent in all of these definitions of magic and ritual is the concept of aim and function. Wallace says that ". . . the function of a cultural element is the effect of its performance or nonperformance in a given cultural setting."[3] According to Wallace, there are four levels in which function operates: biological, instrumental, psychological, and sociological. The important areas of function for the folk belief of fishermen are instrumental, psychological, and sociological. Psychological benefits gained from folk belief are more important to the fishermen than the other two. Instrumental functions are the avowed, direct aims or goals of magic practices; they are designed to handle problems not subject entirely to empirical control.[4] For instance, if fishermen say they keep women off the boat in

order to insure a good fishing trip (# 37), then this is the instrumental function of that practice. The underlying purpose of the taboo on women, usually unknown by the fishermen who practice it, constitutes the psychological level of function. By not allowing women on board the boat, the fishermen relieve some of the anxiety associated with their dangerous occupation. On the sociological level, the belief about women supports an antifeminist social value to which many men in the fishing community cling.

Magic beliefs are only part of a complex system of devices which function as instrumental aids to the fisherman. Magic operates side by side with more practical methods based on rational-empirical science and technology. Some of the practical methods are empirical folk beliefs, but others are direct products of modern technology. This would include the use of radio communication, current weather reports, the lastest mechanical fishing equipment, and steel hull boats. The existence of magic and scientific methods in one system parallels a similar pattern Malinowski noted in primitive cultures, where the two, magic and practical, never fuse despite their application to the same jobs.[5]

The interrelationship between magic and science results in conflicts between the two, and science is usually dominant in modern times. In discussing the confrontation of science and religion, Wallace states that "science *always* wins" because it depends on demonstrable proof.[6] However, in the case of magic beliefs it is often difficult to demonstrate that a particular superstition is invalid. Some fishermen believe that starting a fishing trip on Friday is bad luck (# 3); others who consider themselves more rational deny this belief. The rational person cannot "prove" that the Friday taboo is wrong to the satisfaction of a fisherman whose own experience has "proved" it correct. Malinowski's idea of science and religion coexisting and complementing each other in primitive cultures still has some validity for certain groups such as fishermen in modern urban societies.

All of this still does not explain why magic beliefs have persisted in the twentieth century in the face of contrary scientific knowledge of which the fishermen are completely aware. The beliefs must have a function which is different from their avowed instrumental intention. This leads to the next level of function, psychological. The psychological function of magic belief arises from the basic situation of coastal fishermen discussed in the Introduction: sea fishermen face economic uncertainty, unusual physical dangers, natural hazards, and psychological frustrations in carrying out their occupation. This situation of uncertainty and danger produces a psychological state of anxiety that relates the fishermen's magic beliefs to one of Malinowski's basic theories of the function of magic: "Wherever there is

danger, uncertainty, great incidence of chance and anxiety, even in entirely modern forms of enterprise, magic crops up."[7] The anxiety-ritual theory has gained wide acceptance and some disagreement among anthropologists and social psychologists. A more recent statement of Malinowski's thesis by Theodore Rosenthal and Bernard J. Siegel makes no important alterations: "magic arises as a symbolic means . . . for dealing with the anxiety, frustration, or threat which may result when people are confronted with important environmental forces which they cannot master."[8] Other social scientists have accepted the basic tenets of the theory.[9]

Nearly all of the fishermen's magic beliefs arise as a response to anxiety over their uncertain condition. Uncertainty arises from physical dangers and from economic factors. Economic uncertainties have not been stressed in discussions of the anxiety-ritual theory, but I feel they are of great importance in establishing the context of anxiety. A fisherman may invest a great deal of money in a trip, find fishing bad, and return home with a small catch for all his money and effort. The economic uncertainties are combined with the physical hazards in the mind of a fisherman. When he sets out to sea on a long voyage, he does not know exactly what dangers he may confront: heavy seas, a leaky boat, mechanical troubles, or any of a number of things. As the fisherman leaves port he needs some sort of assurance that his voyage will be successful and that he will return safely. All of these benefits he groups together under one generic term, *good luck*. What can he do to assure himself good luck? There are very few positive actions he can take. Many fishermen nail or insert coins on various parts of their boats for good luck (#s 82, 83, 84, 97). Others have horseshoes tacked up in their cabins (# 81). More numerous are things to avoid doing —taboo actions, objects, or words which bring bad luck. As pointed out earlier a fisherman never whistles on a boat, never brings a black suitcase on board, and never says the word "alligator" on board because all these actions bring bad luck, bad weather, or bad fishing. Knowing that he has not violated any of these taboos, the fisherman loses some of his anxieties. If one of the multitude of taboos is broken, he then has a ready explanation for what does befall him, and in explaining and making concrete the mysterious and unknowable, taboos again relieve some anxiety.

The psychological function of folk belief can at times operate in such a manner that its ultimate gains will be instrumental. Anxiety is reduced when a magical practice is followed, the person acts with more confidence in his task, and a physical steadiness and calmness enables him to perform the task successfully. For instance, if a fisherman believes that catching a seahorse in his net is a good-luck omen (# 79), when he catches one he

may carry out the rest of the day's work without worrying about storms, mechanical failures, and failure to catch fish. The belief will materially aid him by relieving him of psychological anxiety. Thus, magic may function "to increase the efficiency of individuals in the performance of their mechanical tasks."[10] In actual practice, this does not happen often, since among the fishermen there are many more negative beliefs, taboos, and bad-luck omens than positive good-luck signs.

Social functions sometimes operate at the same time as instrumental and psychological ones. There is often a correlation between the social values of a community and its folklore; in the case of coastal fishermen some of their folk beliefs function to support values or inculcate them into the society. This is a two-way process; society can also influence and alter existing folk belief: ". . . ritual patterns which emerge initially as responses to critical areas of uncertainty in a given situation of action are elaborated and reinterpreted according to certain selective value-orientations of the culture."[11] Several values of the fishing community are reflected in their folk belief. The major value expressed by the fishermen in their folk belief is a fear and respect for the sea. Many of the beliefs seek to alleviate the natural hazards of the sea such as hurricanes, storms, waterspouts, drowning, and sinking. Closely connected with this is "hopeful mastery over nature," a value found by Evon Z. Vogt in the New Mexico farming community where nature was also all-important in occupational success or failure.[12] The farmers had water witching as their main control over nature; fishermen have many controls: rituals to break up waterspouts, devices for bringing or stopping the wind, and magic means to keep from drowning. There is a certain parallel between many values of fishermen and the values of Vogt's homesteaders. The fishermen are frontiersmen too in many ways: they face nature directly; they are isolated in their occupation, and they are often independent. One of their strong value-orientations concerns freedom and individuality. Many of them say they are in the fishing business because it offers them a chance to be independent from other men. One man expressed it this way: "You're your own boss, and you do what you want to." When I asked one captain what he liked about fishing, he replied, "The freedom. I can come and go as I please." This independence may partially explain their tenacity in holding on to traditional beliefs in contradiction to what the rest of society thinks of them.

However, several beliefs are shaped by the prevailing society in which the fisherman lives rather than being oriented to his occupational values completely. Many men practice a Sunday taboo. "I can't catch fish on Sunday" (# 32), one of them declared. Others mentioned related versions of the taboo: "If you work on a net on Sunday, you'll tear it up on Mon-

day" (# 20); "Pick up a hammer and drive a nail on Sunday wasn't allowed by one captain" (# 15). These are all based on community values forbidding work on the Sabbath. (See also # 11.) Another taboo is being dropped as social values make it outdated. Most of the time when the traditional taboo against women on a boat (# 37) was reported to me, the informant added a qualification. "Used to be no women on a boat, but that's kind of getting out now." "A lot of fishermen take their wives on the boat, but they say it's bad luck." The social value of women's equality and rights has exerted pressure on the fishermen to alter or discard this traditional taboo.

The concentration on the positive aspects of function to this point should not obscure the fact that magic beliefs also act in a negative or dysfunctional way. Alfred L. Kroeber points out that ritual can interfere with carrying out essential tasks.[13] This would be dysfunction on an instrumental level. Sea fishermen do not have much active ritual; their beliefs do not call for much active participation on their part. What rituals they do have do not usually interfere with their occupational tasks at sea; most of the precautions, such as nailing coins on the boat or avoiding carrying a black suitcase on board, can be performed before a sea voyage begins. The omens do not often disrupt their activities unless a fisherman has a firm belief in a particular omen. For instance, if a fisherman sees a bad omen, such as a bird landing on his boat (#s 73, 74), he may go back to port and miss an entire day of fishing. One fisherman always turns in a certain direction before picking up his nets (# 21). He does this for good luck, but he wastes time and could interfere with another boat.[14]

Psychological dysfunctions also result from fishermen's magic beliefs. Besides reducing anxiety, according to A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, magic can also "give men fears and anxieties from which they would otherwise be free."[15] Omens often cause fears which would not ordinarily arise; the sound of a loon at sea can cause some fishermen to become very anxious (# 72). Radcliffe-Brown goes on to say that without the existence of rites and beliefs the individual would feel no anxiety. But I believe that magic functions in both ways simultaneously; some beliefs cause anxiety, but different beliefs can relieve it. George C. Homans resolves the contradiction between the theories of Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski by establishing a pattern of primary anxiety, primary ritual, secondary anxiety, and secondary ritual.[16] The original anxiety is relieved by a ritual which in turn causes another anxiety if the ritual is not performed, and finally a second ritual allays the second anxiety. This operates only in certain beliefs of coastal fishermen. There is a belief that money should not be carried on a boat (# 36). If a captain is having bad luck and he finds that the original

taboo has been broken by one of his men, he can perform a secondary ritual to relieve the anxiety by throwing the money overboard. There are very few beliefs among the fishermen which fit this pattern in actual practice.

There are only a few minor social dysfunctions reflected by the fishermen's magic beliefs. The individualism and independence of a fisherman, which is reflected by his "eccentric" beliefs in the eyes of the rest of society, have probably kept him from cooperating with other fishermen for group goals. Despite the existence of several shrimp co-operatives, many fishermen still compete alone and at a disadvantage against the big corporations. Individual shrimpers have not been able to organize an effective lobby to represent them in the state capital. The large owners and packers have a strongly organized group to handle their affairs. Mainly, folk beliefs have affected individuals rather than the entire group. Magic operates primarily on a psychological and an instrumental rather than a social level, and on all three levels in a functional rather than a dysfunctional way most of the time.

The functional theories I have been discussing are enhanced and reinforced when applied to the specific situation of the coastal fishermen of Texas. Malinowski's classic case for the anxiety-ritual theory has an obvious parallel on the Texas coast. "It is most significant that in the lagoon fishing, where man can rely completely upon his knowledge and skill, magic does not exist, while in the open sea fishing, full of danger and uncertainty, there is extensive magical ritual to secure safety and good results."[17] Correspondingly, fishermen in the safety and certainty of Texas bays have a weak tradition of magic belief. This may be partially explained by the bay fishermen's lack of contact with past sea traditions, but the beliefs they are aware of are not accepted because they have no psychological function. Gulf fishermen, in their more uncertain and hazardous occupation, have many magic beliefs which are practiced every day by the majority of the men. I collected over twice as many magic beliefs from the average sea fisherman as I did from the average bay fisherman.

The attitudes of bay and sea fishermen toward magic beliefs are also different. Gulf fishermen express caution, rationalization, and internalization as a basis for their belief in magic. The idea of caution was articulated over and over; an active fisherman in Freeport said, "You have so much bad luck in this business, there's no use tempting nothing." Thus, he is just being cautious in practicing magic. Another man who had a strong belief in magic rituals said, "It pays to be cautious." The fishermen's caution makes them follow the beliefs even though they may not admit to practicing them. Many fishermen will express disbelief in magic yet practice it to a certain extent. Most of them realize this and will attribute such an atti-

tude to others if not to themselves. As one man said, "Some of them might not want to tell you that, but they believe in it." Caution can overcome the tendency to disbelieve, as was the case with a young fisherman in Brownsville, who expressed his attitudes toward the common taboo against turning a hatch cover upside down (# 1). "Let's put it this way, that hatch cover was built to fit a certain way, and I don't turn it upside down. I don't believe it, but I still won't do it. There's no use in pressing your luck."

Inherent in this statement is a rationalization of belief which is typical of many practicers of magic. The usual pattern was for an informant to deny a particular belief as a "superstition," then to admit he practices it, and finally to rationalize his practice. A boat owner who used to fish expressed his attitude toward the hatch-cover taboo: "That's superstition. I don't believe on that, but I don't let them turn it over; it's not the right way." Many fishermen said they would not turn a hatch cover upside down because it could cause someone to trip on the deck. One fisherman who had more education than most saw rational explanations behind the beliefs. "They all have foundations in fact. They all have some basis. I guess experience is the best basis for belief." Many fishermen based their rationalization on personal experience; they had seen bad luck result from broken taboos. The fishermen's insistence on making magic beliefs rational is an expression of a value stress upon rational environmental control. In doing this they are simply following cultural pressure from the dominant modern urban society in which they live, a society which ridicules superstition but extols and praises rational technology.

Beliefs are further strengthened by being learned at an early age; many fishermen come from fishing families and have been steeped in occupational traditions all of their lives. The beliefs are internalized; they become part of the personality system.[18] One particularly magic-oriented fisherman recognized this influence. "I've been hearing these all my life. I don't know where it came from, just soaked in as a kid." Each individual is affected to a different degree by the beliefs of the culture. Since magic beliefs usually arise in situations of stress and since individuals differ in their ability to withstand tension, then "individuals least well-equipped to withstand stress ought to be among the first persons to promote the use of magic."[19] The ones who have the greatest need will internalize magic beliefs to the greatest extent. A fisherman in Aransas Pass who had one of the strongest beliefs in taboos and omens experienced discomfort because he had become a successful boat owner and was expected by his social peers to reject these "superstitions." "I'm not supposed to be superstitious, but it [the hatch cover] just don't look right. It don't belong that way. If I see a hatch cover turned over, it makes me feel funny." The hatch-cover taboo is so

internalized into his personality structure that he feels insecure and uneasy if the taboo is broken. He feels this way in spite of the possible ridicule of the surrounding nonfishing society.

Society has made some Gulf fishermen complete skeptics about magic beliefs. I interviewed one of these skeptics, John Mihelich, together with a friend of his, Tony Racki, who was a firm believer in magical practices. John reacted to the magic beliefs which I mentioned in the following way: "Oh, no! There's no such thing. No, I no believe it, and I never did it, and I never see it." He then laughed at the idea. When I told him of a magic device for controlling the wind, he explained why he disbelieved in magic. "I don't believe all that stuff because that be something against nature, and I no believe it." He has a rational mind which accepts beliefs only when they are supported by empirical evidence. If a belief has been proven by his own experience then he believes it. For instance, he had tried a folk cure for a sting wound by a fish:

> But there is another thing that I do believe is, one old man told me, he said the best thing is to take the liver out of the same fish and fry it and put it as hot as you can stand it in the place that you get pinch, or stick or whatever you call, and that relieve your pain because that's nature, that's natural, you know what I mean, because the heat pull that poison out. That kind of things I do believe because I try it.

John's orientation toward rational belief lets him accept magical cures if they are proved by his own experience. When Tony started listing some of the magic he practiced, John asked him, "In other words, you believe in this stupidity?" "That's right," was the answer. Neither man was willing to give up his beliefs or change his attitude. Later John admitted that once he had practiced a magic good-luck belief in constructing a boat, but he seemed embarrassed to have to admit, "Yes, I did it myself; if you ask me why I can't explain why. I can't explain it." He needs to have a rational explanation or experience to support his beliefs.

Since both of these men have similar backgrounds and are about the same age, it is hard to see any obvious explanation for their different attitudes. The reasons are personal and psychological rather than cultural. Tony indicated that he has heard the beliefs since childhood so that the process of internalization probably had a greater effect on him. Even more basic is his psychological need for mechanisms to withstand stress which John does not need because rational science has replaced them. Tony also has much more stress upon him because he is still actively fishing, whereas John has now retired and is running boats he owns from the land. The

anxieties of an active fisherman are more direct, and he has a correspondingly greater need for magic.

In contrast to the feelings of sea fishermen, the attitudes of bay fishermen toward magic belief are nearly devoid of rationalization and internalization because in their society there is a basic denial of all magic beliefs. The usual reaction of a bay fisherman when I mentioned a magic belief was, "I've heard it talked, but I always laughed at them," or "I never did pay any attention to that because I'm not superstitious." Others were even more emphatic in their denial of magic. "We figure if they're that superstitious, they were a little off in the head anyway. Any sensible person wouldn't believe that way." Several old bay fishermen retained a knowledge of magic rituals as interesting tales although they had not assimilated them into a system of belief. A belief in buying the wind (# 107) is told as a joke by several bay fishermen. The few bay informants who believed in some traditional seaman's magic were the exception, and they did not have a complex system of belief as the open sea fishermen did. The ones who were believers explained their beliefs in a vein similar to that of Gulf fishermen, especially emphasizing denial of superstition but a belief in caution. "I'm not superstitious, but I'm careful. I don't like to do anything like that myself." "Everybody was a little bit afraid of superstitions. Back in them days you didn't dare superstitions. I'd always rather pass it up than dare it and get into something." This man implies that "superstitions" are a thing of the past in the bay area, but Gulf fishermen still have magic belief as a vital tradition.

Specific areas of uncertainty in the lives of fishermen are important in establishing the context of anxiety. There are three major areas of uncertainty: locating fish, predicting weather, and handling mechanical breakdown. The weather is the most uncertain aspect, and it has the most magic connected with it. Shrimp beds and fishing grounds are known in general, but the fisherman is never certain exactly where to find good catches. There was not much anxiety over this, since the time of my collection was a period of high productivity in shrimping, and the shrimper does not usually have to wait long for a good catch. Technological advances have made mechanical breakdowns less likely, but things still can go wrong, so that mechanical troubles are included as bad luck in the fishermen's minds. Weather uncertainty is based on day-to-day weather forecasting and unexpected natural occurrences. Weather forecasting is handled by empirical signs, but unexpected storms call for magic control devices such as making the sign of a cross to break up a waterspout (# 115).

I found four specific kinds of magic beliefs on the Texas coast: taboos,

omens, good-luck devices, and customs, controls and aids. Taboos are negative control devices which can be subdivided into taboo actions, objects, animals, people, and speech. I collected a total of sixty different taboos on the coast, more than any other type of magic. The preponderance of taboos indicates the prevailing negative attitude of sea fishermen; they know that not many positive actions beyond the realm of science and technology can bring them success. An overt positive action would commit them to magic, but negative beliefs can be practiced covertly without commitment to nonempirical methods, while the anxiety-relieving function is still served. Taboos function in general to allay anxiety, as do all magic beliefs, but they do it in specific ways. They explain failures which frequently accompany the fishing occupation and disasters which cannot otherwise be explained except as fate. The taboo most frequently recorded on the Texas coast was the one against turning the hatch cover upside down (# 1). Seventy different informants mentioned this belief. The result of breaking the taboo was said to be general bad luck except by one informant, who said the boat would capsize. The usual process of rationalization was more apparent in the hatch-cover taboo than in other beliefs. One man even cited the *Reader's Digest* as evidence:

> In '53 or '54 in the *Reader's Digest* there was the story of a man who turned the hatch cover upside down every time he went in the hatch. Every time he went out something bad happened. So they begun to watch him and noticed what he was doing, and they finally figured out he was turning the hatch cover over.

Widespread beliefs such as the hatch-cover taboo have a very specialized function in individual cases.

> A nephew of mine was working for a Finn, and they were out on Sunday gathering a lot of shrimp. My nephew wanted to come in and watch a ball game. He knew the Finn wouldn't leave as long as they were catching shrimp, so he turned the hatch cover upside down. Sure enough the captain saw it and came on back in. He not only got to watch his ball game, but his money was waiting for him too.

An individual can exploit the magic beliefs of another, but in this case he was punished in the end by losing his job. Two young men told me their father had thrown them overboard for turning the hatch cover upside down.

Fishermen mentioned the taboo against going out on Friday (# 3) forty-two different times. There is specific evidence supporting the anxiety theory in many of the statements of this belief. Several fishermen specified

that "on a long trip, they won't leave on Friday." A short one- or two-day trip is usually close to shore, and there would not be as much danger or corresponding tension on it, and many who accept the taboo would leave on Friday for a short trip. A longer voyage subjects them to more hazards, and they are more hesitant to leave on Friday. The belief also functions as a convenient scapegoat for bad luck by those who do not believe it as firmly. One fisherman said, "Lots of people lay all their bad luck on going out on Friday. They don't pay no attention to it, but then if something does go wrong, they blame it on that."

Four informants mentioned a taboo that is common on land: "If you leave out in the morning, and forget something, and go back and get it, you'll have a bad day that day" (# 12). This belief has a direct practical instrumental function; if a fisherman goes back after something, he has wasted part of the day which could have been spent fishing. A counter ritual to offset the bad luck has been devised: "you have to make a cross, mark a cross on something" (# 13). This is a *conversion ritual*, such as often arises "from the neutralizing or reversal of magic superstitions."[20]

Taboo objects, animals, and people are not as numerous as taboo actions. The most pervasive taboo object is a black suitcase (# 35); forty-two different fishermen mentioned it. Many men hold tenaciously to this belief, as they do to the hatch-cover and Friday taboos.

> If a man was hired on a boat, and he came on board with a black suitcase, they would turn him loose right then and would tell him to get off the boat. All of the old fishermens always thought black suitcases was hard luck.

Other black items were also forbidden by some captains: slickers (# 40), rags (# 38), paint (# 39), and shoes (# 40). The oldest and strongest item was a black suitcase, and the other black objects may have become taboo only because of its influence. When a man accepts a belief as strongly as some accept the black-suitcase taboo, he can become extremely irrational. "Bring the devil on my boat, but don't bring a black suitcase. I'd buy the suitcase if it cost $50." This man held such a conviction in the efficacy of the belief that he was willing to take a financial loss to overcome it. Here is where the extremes of folk belief can become dysfunctional.

There were only four speech taboos among the fishermen. By far the most prevalent was the ban on the word *alligator* (# 57). One man told me the belief while sitting in a supply room on the wharf, and he had to use the word; the owner of the supply house asked him about using it then, and the fisherman replied, "I'm sitting in your supply room; it's liable to fall in tonight." He said this only half jokingly. Another man said if a crew

member said "alligator" at sea it was advisable to turn around and come back. When I asked one person about it, he refused to say "alligator" even on land. "It's bad luck anywhere. Not just on the boat. The kids say it all the time, but I don't." The other three speech taboos are saying "good luck" before a trip (# 58) and, in the North, saying "pig" or "horse" (# 59).

There were additional taboos which only one or two informants mentioned. At times these were personal beliefs which an individual had devised for himself, or they were traditional beliefs which are not widespread now. These functioned the same as the more popular beliefs. Examples of the personal taboos are eating peanuts (# 27) and having a parrot or monkey on the boat (# 52). A completely personal belief arose out of a series of coincidences: "Every time she [his wife] makes curtains for the boat, that's a sure sign that they was going to have trouble. So she stopped making curtains for the boat" (# 45). There are traditional taboos which have almost died out on the Texas coast. Only one man said it is forbidden to turn a loaf of bread upside down (# 29). This belief goes back to at least nineteenth-century England: "A loaf of bread should not be turned upside down . . . for a ship would be lost for every loaf so placed."[21] Another traditional belief had only one reporting; this was a taboo for anything colored blue (# 47, variant). Here there was at least one man who believed so strongly in the taboo that his actions became irrational, if not humorous. "The man I used to work for, if you painted anything blue on his boat, he'd fire you. He thought that was the worst thing you can do. A guy came on his [boat] with a blue tie on, and he got out a knife and cut his tie off and handed him a five-dollar bill."

Magic omens of the fishermen can be good or bad. The few good omens known to Gulf fishermen can relieve anxiety, but since bad omens cause more anxiety than they relieve, they must have another function. When a bad omen is seen, it is used as either a warning or a scapegoat device. I collected twenty omens from Texas coastal fishermen. No single omen appeared as many times as some of the popular taboos.

An ancient sailing omen has been adapted by a few fishermen in Texas. One of the informants who reported it was originally from Maine; his version went this way: "If you see a rat leave a boat, they claim—that goes back to sailing days—if a sailor saw a rat leave a boat, he wouldn't get on the boat. They knew that boat wasn't coming back. And there's truth to that; somehow those rats knew" (# 67). At sea there is an ever-present danger of sinking; the men on ships want to have some way of advance warning, and so they have invented an omen which has become a part of their tradition.

Some fishermen have assimilated another traditional sea omen, the albatross. The beliefs about albatrosses and sea birds in general take different forms. Four informants said that when an albatross or petrel landed on a boat it was bad luck (# 73). One man said that bad luck came only when the albatross was killed (# 8). Another man offers a personal experience as proof. A funny looking bird landed on the boat and stayed there. And the boys said, 'That bird is hard luck; let's kill that bird.' And I wouldn't let them, and we got out there by Eighteen Mile Light and ran out of fuel, and they blamed it on the bird." The "funny looking bird," probably a member of the petrel family, furnishes a convenient scapegoat for an obvious human or mechanical error; someone forgot to fuel up the boat before they left or there was a leak in the tank. The function of the omen in this case was social; it prevented one man from being blamed for forgetfulness, and group solidarity was maintained.

Sometimes, this omen is less specific as to the condition; any kind of bird landing on the boat is bad luck. When a dove lands on the boat the specific result is death (# 74). In one way the bird omen is related to rats leaving a ship. "If a bird lit on your boat, it was bad luck because they knew you were in trouble even if you didn't know it yet" (# 74). Like the rats, birds are given prophetic powers, foreknowledge of impending disaster.

Omens can occur at a boat launching. If something goes wrong at a launching this is an omen that the boat will have bad luck the rest of its career. Anxiety would continually surround a jinx boat such as this. Many fishermen believe in jinx boats, although the cause for a jinx is not always a mishap at its launching. One fisherman said, "I'm a firm believer that a wrong name on a boat can jinx a boat" (# 43). When I asked him for some names that were jinxes, he would not cite any. This belief is still a vague scapegoat device. Any bad luck on any boat which he had captained could be blamed on the name of the boat.

Omens and taboos, which generally suggest bad luck, outnumber by two to one good-luck devices and customs and controls and aids, which are usually positive ways to gain good luck. The magic beliefs are related to the fisherman's negative attitude toward his uncertain existence. Instead of having more positive magic ways of overcoming his situation, he has more negative omen and taboos which if not heeded can compound his anxiety. The omens and taboos were usually obeyed so that the psychological gain is eventually more important than the loss.

Good-luck devices and customs, although fewer in number, have an important functional place in the fisherman's occupational life; I collected twenty-five of them. These devices are positive control signs which serve to bring luck in fishing, in producing good weather, and in operating the boat.

Of the popular good-luck devices, horseshoes (# 81) have been mentioned previously, and the next most popular device has to do with coins. One of the beliefs is related to a taboo against carrying money on board a boat (# 36). "Belief was that if a fisherman went to sea he was supposed to go broke or leave his money at home. I used to throw my change overboard. My crew used to drop their change in the compass box, and I'd get rid of it for them. I believe back in our day you paid for what you got." This informant believed that he somehow bought good luck—whether it was from God, fate, or chance he did not say. Inherent in this practice is a concept of showing that you are in need, that you are without money and have to have a successful trip.

Coins are also placed at various points on the boat to insure good luck. Sometimes coins are nailed to the top of the mast (# 83), put in the compass box (but not thrown away) (# 82), or put in sounding lead (#84). Faith in the efficacy of the belief is illustrated by this testimony. "Back in the old days when we was looking for the snapper banks we had a sounding lead. I've seen the sounding lead full of pennies and nickels. They'd drive coins in it for good luck. I never did believe it. One fellow said he got three dollars out of it in pennies, nickels, and dimes." This was among sea fishermen, but when one bay fisherman said he had seen money driven into the bits on boats (# 83), he added, "I don't know what it was for." This is indicative of the bay fisherman's lack of knowledge about traditional magic beliefs.

Positive control of the elements and aid from nature are some of the most important functions of magic sea beliefs. There are various means of raising the wind which are survivals of sailing days. One of the most common, with twenty-four informants reporting it, was the belief in whistling for the wind (# 106). This belief has always had taboo elements mixed with positive control. Since the wind is unwanted by modern fishermen, any practices believed to make the wind blow are usually taboo. Many men heard the belief in childhood when sailing ships were being used and an instrumental function was still possible. "One thing that my Dad taught me was to whistle for the wind. On the sailing vessel when they would be becalmed, they would whistle for the wind, and maybe that afternoon the wind would blow." This informant does not necessarily say that whistling brought the wind; the time span he leaves between the condition and the result enables him to doubt a direct cause-effect relationship, but it also leaves the possibility of the validity of the belief.

A related belief is that of "buying the wind" (# 107), which I collected from fifteen informants. Richard Dorson collected this belief among Maine fishermen, and at that time the belief had been collected only in that area.

"Yet for all the instances of wind and storm raisers in folklore and mythology . . . the counterpart of the gale-tossed down-Easter has not yet been sighted."[22] My collecting shows that this belief is very widespread, since many of my Texas informants heard the belief in Florida and Georgia as well. This belief has many narratives associated with it which will be discussed in Chapter 2.

There are other methods for acquiring wind which are not so well known. "They'd stick a knife in the mast pointed in the direction they wanted the wind to blow [# 111], and there was a story behind this. One fella stuck the knife in, and it broke, and he got too much wind. He couldn't get the blade out. They usually pulled the blade out when they had enough wind." I collected this belief nine times, but I found a similar traditional device for getting the wind, scratching the mast (# 110), only once. A knife in the mast was used to stop a waterspout as well (# 118). More popular was shooting a gun into a waterspout, which was said to break it up (# 117). The Italian fishermen believed that making the sign of the cross would disperse a waterspout (# 116) (see Chapter 5).

A fisherman has other ways to get nature on his side besides direct control; some of their beliefs concern sea creatures which traditionally aid fishermen. Many beliefs surround the porpoise as a helpful animal. Twenty-nine informants believed that a porpoise will keep a body afloat or save a drowning man by pushing him to shore (# 122). Many fishermen claim to have seen this phenomenon. "I saw a porpoise pushing a dead man once. This man drowned, and they were looking for him. They saw something churning in the water, and sure enough it was the porpoises pushing his body in toward the beach." Personal experience intensifies a belief which has been heard most of a fisherman's life. One man traced the belief back to his childhood. "My mother used to say, 'If you drown, I guess the porpoise will push you to shore.' That goes back generations. I heard it when I was a boy. They're supposed to take care of people." Other good qualities of porpoises have become a part of folk belief. Eight informants said that porpoises keep sharks away (# 123). One man said porpoises will lead a boat through an unknown channel (# 124). Also porpoises are good-luck signs when a fisherman sees them as he is coming in (# 70). Quite naturally a taboo has arisen to protect porpoises:

> There's another thing most of the old fishermen won't do is harm a porpoise. They believe it's good luck. I was on a boat one time that the captain shot a porpoise for bait. When we got to the docks I got off that boat. Not that I'm superstitious; I just don't believe in harming them. (# 5)

Pelicans and seagulls are also protected by less widely known taboos (#s 6, 7).

Boat building and launching customs support beliefs, but they also put beliefs into practice as rituals. The most pervasive boat building custom is putting a coin under the mast (# 97); I collected it twenty-five different times on the Texas coast. The owner of a boat building and repairing yard in Galveston was very familiar with the custom and the belief underlying it.

> They put a silver dollar or a silver fifty-cent piece or a dime, something silver, under the mast for good luck. That's the first thing we look for in schooners; sometimes the imprint is there but not the coin. It had wore out. Most of them still do it. They throw it in right before the masts are put in.

One man thought the custom had "died out when engines came in," but my research indicates that it is still widely practiced. This type of belief serves to establish a ship as "lucky" from the time of its construction.

Other construction customs are putting a figurehead on a boat (# 98), driving a silver spike into the keel (# 99), and laying a keel from east to west (# 100). None of these are widely known, and the first two represent sailing boat traditions which are dying out. But the last custom is still practiced when possible by some boat builders.

> I had a boat builder come in one time, and he asked me how the keel was laid. And I showed him, and he said, "That's right, east to west. You're supposed to lay a keel the same way a person's buried." And I broke my leg later, and he said that shouldn't have happened because we laid the keel right.

Even when a belief has been followed and bad luck still results, a true believer will not doubt the effectiveness of the belief; he will simply wonder why things did not go right in this instance. The construction customs usually insure a safe, well-built boat rather than guaranteeing the safety of the men working on the boat. Fishermen have to have faith in the soundness of their boat, since it can undergo extreme punishment in storms. The customs, when followed, add to this faith.

Launching customs serve exactly the same purpose, and it is likely that a fishing captain will be present to participate in the rituals. Many fishermen follow the familiar ritual of breaking a champagne bottle on the bow of the boat at launching (# 102). Others throw parties at a launching to insure a prosperous life for the boat (# 103). And many times a priest

will bless the boat (# 104). "Once a priest christened a boat, took off his robes, and went fishing."

One traditional custom is enacted annually instead of at one specific point in the life of a boat. This is the blessing of the shrimp fleet held in many Texas ports every year (# 105). The custom is ancient and has also been performed in this century on the Gulf Coast in Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida. In some ports it is a huge celebration lasting two weeks, and in other places it is just a one-day affair. Captain Jim Roche described the big festival in Morgan City, Louisiana, as having parades, prizes for the best-decorated boats, a king of the festival who is the most productive fisherman for the year, and big dances. Jim said, "This is not for the tourist; this is for the fishermen." But, of course, many tourists come to festivals, which seem to be getting more commercial. Captain Erwin in Galveston told me how their blessing was instigated:

> We went to the Chamber of Commerce and the Beach Tourist Outfit, so they got interested in it, so now it's become quite a big thing here. We don't have the Splash Day for the opening of the beach season, so now they are practically using the blessing of the fleet for that. So few people come to the waterfront, and it really draws them down there on that blessing of the fleet.

It would seem from this that the blessing has become primarily a tourist attraction, but when I asked Captain Erwin if it was mainly for the tourists he replied, "Well, no. Because in the beginning we had no inkling of the tourists. We just didn't care about the tourists at all, it was for the boats, not for the tourists."

I observed a blessing of the fleet in Palacios, Texas, in August 1967. It was a two-day festival with a dance on Saturday night, followed by the blessing and a shrimp and barbecue dinner on Sunday. The activity was centered around the local Catholic Church, but many Protestants took part. Catholic and Protestant fishermen had their boats blessed by the local priest, who was in a small motor launch that passed by the decorated boats as they were tied up at the docks. A large crowd watched as the boats then formed a procession and went out into the bay in a long line. The dinner followed immediately at the Catholic Church. My own observation supports the testimony of the fishermen; there are commercial aspects, but the event is primarily for the fishermen. It functions, especially for the Catholics, as a religious ceremony to give the fishermen spiritual assurance that God is with them in their occupational efforts for another year. The psychological effect of this is a sense of security and well-being. The

psychological gains are so great for fishermen that they overcome their own religious backgrounds. A Protestant fisherman who has been taught all of his life that Catholic rituals are pagan can suppress this prejudice in order to acquire a secure feeling from the ceremony. Several Protestants said religious medals were given to them at blessings and that they kept them hanging in their boats. Thus, even a tangible religious symbol can be accepted if the psychological circumstances are favorable. Most fishermen testified that they would always go through a blessing if it were given, and many said they felt bad if they missed it. Because this particular folk belief and custom has the support of an organized religion and of the nonfishing society, it probably has more strength for Catholics and Protestants than other beliefs thought of as "superstitions."

Several of the magic beliefs which I have discussed—the hatch-cover, whistling, black-suitcase, and alligator taboos, the practices associated with coins, buying or whistling for the wind, and the lore surrounding the porpoise—are so widely known and practiced that they stand out from the rest. Agreement on their validity is widespread. Fishermen reported these beliefs most frequently and mentioned them first. The more people there are who believe in a magic practice, the easier it is for an individual to accept it; society acts as a reinforcing agent for the beliefs. If the community accepts a belief, then the fisherman is free to believe it also, but if the community rejects a belief, the fisherman will usually deny it. One of the widespread means for validating beliefs is to tell narratives, magic belief legends, which give evidence in support of superstitions.

2. Magic Belief Legends

When talking about superstitions, fishermen often bring in narratives to illustrate points they want to make. They will relate personal experiences, incidents that happened to friends, and stories that have circulated for years. As I was interviewing John Mihelich and Tony Racki, their discussion of superstitions became so heated that they almost forgot about me and the tape recorder. Tony especially worked many stories into the conversation.

> I know one boat was really a jinx, that was *Georgia Cape*. The man who had it before in Brunswick, he changed two engines on that boat in less than two years. Felix Coombs bought it; he have to change the engine next year, then he got rid of it, burn up or something happen to the boat.

John's reply to this was, "I call that carelessness." Tony thought the story proved his point about jinx boats (# 42), but the rational John would have none of it.

Tony's story had no explanation of the jinx, but other such tales do. Captain James Mills told a story about a jinx boat which gave a reason for its bad luck:

> One boat they were building, fish boat, I disremember what it was now, but when they was about to launch it something happened—something went wrong—during the time they were launching. And she never did have no good luck. As long as she was used she was a bad-luck boat straight through.

The underlying belief seems to be that if there is bad luck at the beginning, it will continue for the life of the boat.

Both Captain Mills' and Tony Racki's stories are based on their knowl-

edge of particular boats. Other narratives circulating among fishermen are removed from their own experiences and are, in fact, traditional legends. Doc Moots told me about a jinx boat that was from England:

> I read this. There was a ship built in England one time, and while they was building that ship, they lost a man. And that was back there in the rivet days when they riveted them up. They didn't have the welding. In them days they had to put them rivets about two inches apart. That's the way they kept them from leaking, lap the metal over, then rivet them across. They lost this man while they was building this ship, and they never did know where he was. And that ship just wouldn't run, wouldn't go, wouldn't do nothing. And after about three years they decided to tear it up; they couldn't make a success of it . They dry-docked it and started dismantling it, and they found that man welded up in a place in that ship. Their belief was that that was why they never could do nothing with the ship. I read that several years ago. That is the story on that. But they just couldn't get that ship to do nothing. (Motif C 541.1)

Doc authenticates the legend by citing a printed source, but he has passed it into oral circulation, and it is related to traditional stories in which a death causes bad luck.

Doc's story as well as the other two are examples of different types of legends which are closely related to fishermen's magic beliefs. Tony Racki's narrative of a jinx boat is a *memorate*,[1] since it is based on personal experience. Practically every fisherman who knew any superstitions also told personal-experience stories about them. Doc Moots' story of a death causing a jinx boat is a *belief fabulate*, which illustrates a particular magic belief but is not based on personal experience.[2] Doc's story can also be identified as a *migratory legend* since it exists over a wide geographic area rather than in just one locale.[3] These legend categories overlap and can be better understood within the storytelling context.

Fishermen usually think of belief fabulates and migratory legends as historical; the events described took place in the past. A teller may believe that the legends are true, but they are removed from his actual experience. He has to have heard the story from tradition and have been interested enough in it to remember it and tell it again. On the other hand, the memorate is based on something that happened to him or to someone he knew. The memorate is close and firmly believed in, and thus told more often by more men. Despite these differences, belief fabulates and memorates are closely associated with each other because of their relationship with magic folk belief.

Folklorists have long recognized the relationship between these belief genres. Reidar Christiansen states, "the main function of such legends is to serve as evidence needed to keep the belief alive and therefore new evidence is continually required."[4] Wayland D. Hand makes a similar point: "legend does not lead an independent literary existence . . . but is a part of folk belief."[5] The relationship is basic, and several studies define and establish patterns of interplay. Linda Dégh states, "In its natural existence, the so-called local or belief legend is inseparably interwoven with other manifestations of live folk belief."[6] Lauri Honko has concentrated specifically on the relationship of memorate and folk belief.[7] These scholars have formulated valuable theories which in general are supported by my field research on folk belief narratives among Gulf Coast fishermen.

Legends, memorates, and folk beliefs are related within the context in which they are verbally expressed by fishermen. Conversations of fishermen about superstition invariably contain memorates and sometimes migratory legends. I observed this many times when a group of fishermen were together. When I was talking to John Mihelich and Tony Racki, we discussed controlling the wind, which led Tony to tell a memorate about a time when he used a magic device to break up a waterspout. I did not ask for this narrative; rather it came up spontaneously in the conversation. This was the usual pattern in interviews with one man and discussions with several. Obviously the presence of a collector of folklore will influence the conversation, but, judging from my observation of other situations with fishermen when I was not collecting, I think the interviews were close to the natural context of fishermen's discussions of folk belief.

Memorates and legends, then, arise spontaneously in conversations about superstition. One of the central considerations of the fishermen in these conversations is degree of belief. In talking to them about superstitions, I would not usually have to ask about their belief; the fishermen would volunteer this information. In a group of fishermen there might be several levels of belief, from total acceptance to total rejection. The believer would be likely to tell a personal-experience story to back up his belief, but the nonbeliever would be just as likely to reply with a statement of rejection. In the conversation between Tony and John, the rejection of belief by John led to the telling of a memorate by Tony. Tony gave a general statement about marking down the Star of David to break up a waterspout (# 119). John said, "Did you ever did it? Did you ever see any happen like that?" And Tony replied, "Yes! Yes, sir! And I tell you one thing. I was one time at Port [name cannot be discerned from recording], you know like in the spring of the year like last month." John interrupted with, "You get plenty of them over there." And Tony

proceeded to tell a detailed personal-experience story of breaking up a waterspout (see Chapter 5). At the end of the memorate John said, "I stick to my first answer to that, and I don't believe it, and that is not true. I can say it is not true from my part because I've been through enough. The best thing when you are close to them things is keep from it if you can."

Since there are so many different attitudes among the fishermen toward their traditional superstitions, this kind of verbal conflict seems inevitable. Within the context of conflict of opinions, memorates and belief fabulates are valuable expressions for offering evidence in attempts to prove the validity of certain beliefs. Memorates are functionally more important in this way because as first- or second-hand testimony they are considered more valid,[8] but they are not considered conclusive by the nonbelievers. Belief fabulates do not function in this way as often or as widely as memorates, but they do come up at times as historical evidence for the validity of beliefs.

Belief is an important factor in the context of legend telling. The above discussion of John and Tony is typical of the usual context of belief narratives. Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi describe a similar legend-telling session in which the collectors did not participate as discussants.[9] In the transcript of that session, as well as in most of the sessions I observed on the Texas coast, there is no uniformity of belief, but belief is of central concern to all of the participants. Some believe and some do not believe, and a large part of the conversation is an informal debate between believers and nonbelievers. The comments of Dégh's informants are similar to the statements of fishermen in a like situation: "This is a joke." "This is the truth. Everybody knows about it." "I have heard it too, but I am not sure about it." "I wonder . . ." "I don't believe this." "I do, I do . . ." "Talk, talk, too much waste of time. I have never seen anything, you can take my word on that." "This is real truth, Aunt Emmy." "How you can lie!"[10] An entire spectrum of belief is contained in these quotes and in quotes from fishermen telling legends: "And there's truth to that." "All I know is hearsay." "It makes you wonder." "Now that's just a story that was handed down, but it's supposed to be true." "I didn't see it, but I know that's the truth." "It was just one of them things that happened. Coincidence." "In other words, you believe in this stupidity?" "That's right." "I don't believe it, and that is not true." All of the above quotes came from fishermen telling belief fabulates and memorates; they are remarkably close in content and tone to the comments from Dégh's legend-telling session.

Recently Robert Georges criticized the belief factor in the standard definitions of legend.[11] His point, that not all people believe the legends

they tell or hear, is certainly valid, but the concern with belief of the group who tell supernatural or superstition legends should be a part of the definition of the genre. The contextual information cited above indicates that in order to exist supernatural legends require some degree of belief by someone in the group. The conflict among affirmation, doubt, and denial seems central to the context of legend expression, and this element of conflict is not present in the context of fictional storytelling such as the narrating of märchen, jokes, and animal tales. Other kinds of legends, such as hero legends, place legends, and local character anecdotes, may not have the conflict of belief as part of their context, but again some degree of belief seems necessary to their tradition.

The contextual relationship of folk belief to legend is supported by a structural relationship. Several studies have been done on legend based on the structural theories of Vladimir Propp and Alan Dundes.[12] Daniel Barnes points out a Proppian structure in a series of campus horror legends.[13] Bess Lomax Hawes formulates the same basic structure in the traditional Mexican-American legend of La Llorona.[14] Dundes emphasizes the importance of cross-genre structural studies in his comparison of the common structural patterns underlying a North American Indian folktale and a related superstition.[15] The segment of Propp's morphology which these scholars note in legends is also found in fishermen's legends of the Gulf Coast.

When a belief involves a taboo, the legend associated with it will usually deal with the breaking of the taboo and the consequences of breaking it. This points directly to the structural relationship of superstition and legend. A good example of this relationship is in the taboo against starting a fishing trip on Friday (# 3) and an associated belief fabulate. Captain Harrison of Freeport, who had a particularly strong belief in the Friday taboo, told the following story. "I believe that originated in England. They launched a ship on Friday, laid the keel on Friday, it was named *Friday,* made its maiden voyage on Friday, and it never came back. You check your histories of seamanship." The story is a migratory legend, reported by Fletcher S. Bassett in 1885, and the core belief was traditional at that time.[16] Captain Harrison obviously believes the tale, since he thinks it is a part of history, and his testimony also reveals a total acceptance and practice of the associated taboo. The belief fabulate functions to support the superstition; it gives evidence for the validity of the belief. This particular legend depends for its existence on the superstition. Without the knowledge of the superstition, the legend would not serve a vital function and would probably be lost or would become a tale told strictly for entertainment.

The interdependence of the Friday taboo and legend can also be seen on a structural level. The application of Dundes' structural pattern to the Friday legend would proceed as follows: implied interdiction (never start a trip on Friday), violation (boat is launched on Friday), consequence in the form of a lack (boat is lost at sea). The interdiction element is based on the traditional superstition, which can be stated structurally: cause condition (if you leave on Friday), result (you'll have bad luck). The underlying pattern is the same in superstition and narrative; in the narrative the condition is present because the interdiction is violated, and the consequence element of the legend is the same as the result element of the superstition. Structurally, the legend is dependent on the superstition; without the cause-result superstition there would be no interdiction-violation-consequence pattern. The structural interdependence parallels the contextual interdependence. The completeness of the pattern illustrating the bad-luck consequence functions as evidence to support the belief.

A similar interdependence exists between superstition and memorate. As Honko says, memorates "reveal those situations in which supernatural tradition was actualized and began directly to influence behavior."[17] The behavior of fishermen is definitely affected by the Friday superstition, and memorates describe the action which is based on the belief. Captain Harrison also said, "I have never made a successful trip on Friday, and that's facts." He gave the following short memorate as illustration: "Last time I left the dock on Friday was about five years ago and didn't make it no further than Sabine when the clutch fell out." This is no the same kind of supernatural experience that Honko analyzes in which a spirit is observed, but it is supernatural in that the breaking of a magic taboo is believed to be the cause of misfortune. The captain's behavior after this event is based on the superstition and the experience described in the memorate. Thus a first-hand memorate can act as a rationalization for belief in a superstition.

A memorate can also be told as second-hand experience and it still relates to a core superstition. In 1971, I collected a Friday memorate from a fisherman who knew Captain Harrison. He related the experience of Harrison's last trip on Friday with one significant difference: "Harrison went out on a Friday, and he sunk his boat on that trip." The consequence element of the structure has become more severe from the clutch falling out to the sinking. This would make the memorate more effective as a reinforcement for the taboo. The change was probably not consciously made; rather, it was likely the result of faulty memory. However, the more severe consequence also makes the story more interesting and exciting. The fish-

erman who told the second-hand Friday memorate did not necessarily believe in the Friday taboo. He said that superstitions had been "impressed upon" him as a child, but he added, "I didn't particularly follow them." He told the memorate as an anecdote to characterize the superstitious Captain Harrison. But again the belief element is important in the context, because his telling of the memorate indicates the possibility that the superstition is valid.

Nonbelievers tell memorates to prove that superstitions are fallacious. These stories are related to what Linda Dégh calls "negative legends," which she describes as "built up against communally known and confirmed belief concepts with the intent to discredit them."[18] I collected two negative memorates concerning the Friday taboo. One combined the Friday belief with the superstition about the unlucky number thirteen:

> There's plenty of them wouldn't go out on Friday. Mr. Harvey built a new boat called the *Wave*, and we were getting her ready to go, got her iced up and everything. I'm not superstitious, but I asked Donald if he was superstitious and he said no. And I asked him if he knew that it was Friday the thirteenth and he said no, but he'd ask Mr. Harvey about going out. Donald was superstitious, but he acted like he wasn't. He went on out, and on his second drag he got thirteen baskets, and when his trip was over he had 113 barrels. And that broke him of that superstition.

This memorate functions to negate the Friday taboo and the superstition surrounding the number thirteen. It still follows the interdiction-violation-consequence pattern, but the consequence is good luck, which is the opposite of the result element of the superstition. Since the man who related the memorate did not believe the superstition, the memorate would tend to reinforce his disbelief.

However, negative memorates can also be told by believers. Captain Gorman said, "I never would leave on a Friday." I asked him, "What's the belief behind that?" He replied, "Every time I would leave on Friday something would happen, I'd have bad luck, make a— or broke her. So we'd wait until even at night, past midnight." He must believe in the superstition, since his behavior is controlled by it. But after explaining why he practiced the taboo, he proceeded to tell this memorate:

> *Captain Gorman:* I know a fellow, Bob McNally, he started to build his boat on a Friday, he finished it on a Friday, and he put it overboard on a Friday and went shrimping on a Friday, and he always had good luck.

Mullen: Just the opposite.

Captain Gorman: So that's the way it goes. But I don't know. It's just some people have luckier days than other days.

This memorate is similar to the Friday fabulate in that a series of taboo breakings occur, but after all of the violations of the interdiction, the consequence is good luck, not bad. The fact that a man who believes and practices the superstition could tell a memorate which seems to negate belief illustrates the complexity of the context of belief. Captain Gorman's comments at the end explain the contradiction. He thinks the Friday taboo works for him, but other individuals may have different results. This kind of belief makes rationalizing the inconsistencies of superstitions easier; every man operates on his own system of luck.

The fisherman who believes and practices superstitions needs means of rationalization because of the constant skepticism and ridicule he confronts even from fellow fishermen. Memorates and belief fabulates provide one means of rationalization. The negative legends work against his belief by seeming to show empirical evidence to disprove the superstitions, but positive legends can be offered as counterevidence. Captain Roche gave a variant of the Friday legend which seemed to be a response to the empirical scientific attitude of society:

Captain Roche: In England they built a boat there, and they built it on Friday, and uh, they only worked on Fridays, and they sailed it on Friday the thirteenth, and they went around and got a captain called Friday. And when she sailed on Friday the thirteenth she never turned around and come back to England no more. That's the way it is, I don't know, just something, you know.

Mullen: But you said they were trying to prove something by doing that?

Captain Roche: Well, they were trying to prove that Friday didn't mean nothing. It was just an old superstition. And they was trying to do away with it once and for all, but it didn't work out that way. They're still superstitious. (*Laughs*) That one never come back.

His explanation at the end suggests that the incident was a scientific experiment designed to show the triumph of rationality over superstition, but it backfired; the consequence of the multiple breaking of taboos was still extreme bad luck. The point of the story seems to be that there are mysterious forces beyond human control, unknowable realms beyond scientific understanding.

This principle underlies many of the legends, but it is not always related

to a specific core superstition. Some supernatural narratives have generalized beliefs at their core rather than structurally identifiable superstitions. In some memorates the narrative is more important than the statement of belief. One often-told memorate had a belief inherent in it, but I never collected the belief separately. The memorate was associated with an eccentric captain: "He used to go up the mast carrying a hatchet, yelling 'Jesus Christ,' and asking Him to meet him halfway, cussing God. He got mad when he wasn't catching nothing. We thought he didn't catch because he was a wicked man" (Motif D2061.2.4.1, Q221.4). The core belief here can be expressed in the form of a traditional superstition: cause condition (if you blaspheme God), result (you'll have bad luck or won't catch fish), but since I never collected a superstition stated this way, it should be labeled as a value or norm of society. The relationship between the norm and the narrative is similar to the relationship of structured superstition to narrative. The memorate still offers evidence and supports the value of the group.

The value or norm of this story is a religious one: do not take the name of the Lord in vain. Since the captain breaks this norm, the narrative parallels those memorates analyzed by Honko which deal with "those experiences which begin with the violation of a norm."[19] The breaking of a norm also relates this memorate to the basic legend structure: implied interdiction (do not take the name of the Lord in vain), violation (captain climbs the mast cursing God), consequence in the form of a lack (captain is unable to catch fish). The consequence as punishment emphasizes the importance of the underlying social value. In variants of the memorate, other specific consequences were mentioned. Tom Jessup, a black fisherman, told it this way:

> Well, I mean, I heard it from some old fishermen. They said it was thundering and lightning, and the captain wanted to pick up boats. And said everybody was scared, thundering and lightning out there. And the lightning real sharp, and he reached down and grabbed the hatchet and run up the mast. Said, "All right, God," said, "Goddammit," said, "Meet me halfway." And when he got halfway up the mast post, lightning struck. Broke it down.

There is a certain irony in the captain's punishment in that he gets what he asks for. He asks God to meet him halfway, and it is when he is halfway up the mast that God meets him with lightning. Another black fisherman told of a different punishment. "Same boat that he was on went down and never came back up. The whole crew was drowned." Here even innocent crew members are punished for the blasphemy of the captain.

This last punishment element is related to a narrative detail which cropped up in several variants of the memorate. Captain Roche told the following story:

> *Captain Roche:* The only thing that, uh, when the boat come in, the crew member say that the captain climbed the mast. Was halfway up with the hatchet and wanted the good Lord to come meet him, he was going to cut his head off, because he was having such bad luck. And it was just a crew member that told us that.
> *Mullen:* And what'd they do when they got back in?
> *Captain Roche:* Well, when they come back into the dock, they packed their clothes and quit. They got off the boat.

This is related to the previous example in that the crew fears being around such a captain because they may be punished when God strikes him down. Behavior is affected by the belief, as illustrated in the memorate. The negative attitude toward the captain reinforces the value-orientation. Other informants said such things as: "He was a wicked man" and "It was just sickening to hear a man like that." The central value against blasphemy is supported within the memorate and in contextual statements such as these.

It is not surprising that the relationship between value and memorate is similar to that of superstition and legend, since memorates can become full traditional legends. Honko states, "For memorates told many times tend to become codified and approach a collective tradition."[20] Dégh postulates that "every fabulate is based on a memorate."[21] This postulative memorate she calls "the proto-memorate." The story of the captain climbing the mast seems to be in a transition state between memorate and belief fabulate. Some of the informants reported it as a first-hand experience: "I know one fellow at home. I've actually seen him crawl up the mast and cuss Jesus Christ to His face." Another man claimed his father was the one the story was told about: "Dad would climb up the mast and tell God to meet him halfway. He could cuss a blue streak. He was a pretty tough old customer for a little man." He speaks of his father in admiring tones, but he was the only one to do so. Other fishermen also associated the story with his father, but they condemned his actions. Some fishermen told the memorate as a second-hand experience, such as the variants quoted previously by Captain Roche and Tom Jessup. The first- and second-hand accounts support the labeling of the story as a memorate, but other elements suggest that it is becoming or has been a belief fabulate. For one thing, the story has the kind of "narrative value" of an "exciting nature," to borrow two of Honko's phrases, which could make it into an entertainment legend.[22] In fabulates

an inherent belief is of less importance, and this is certainly true of the climbing-the-mast tale.

Another factor which shows this tale as a developing fabulate is that it is losing its "direct personal touch."[23] Several of the variants have the personal touch, but the fact that the stories were told about at least five different captains shows that it is no longer as personal as it used to be and that it is part of a larger folk tradition. The memorate was told about Captains Jones, Swenson, Davidson, Tomkins, and Kirby. Other versions did not mention specific names but were very likely about different captains than the five named. The story as told by Texas fishermen was set in several different places: Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida, and "on the East Coast," and it seems to be related to other traditional sea legends. It is similar to the buying-the-wind legend (a full discussion of which comes later in this chapter) in that a captain defies God and is punished in both stories. Horace P. Beck reports the legend of a blasphemous captain in Maine who is lost at sea.[24] All of these legends are probably related to the widespread ancient legend of the Flying Dutchman (Motif E511). The best-known part of the Dutchman legend is the phantom ship which is an evil omen at sea, but the legendary origin of the ship connects it with the blasphemous-captain memorates on the Texas coast. A Dutch captain curses God because of a gale; when the Holy Ghost appears, he shoots at Him, and the captain is "condemned . . . to navigate always without putting into port."[25] The Gulf Coast captain uses a hatchet instead of a gun, and his punishment is different, but otherwise the stories are remarkably similar. This narrative, then, fits one of Wayland Hand's concepts of fabulate, "a poetic creation of the larger folk community."[26] The story is not just a personal description of an observed incident; it is a traditional tale with communal aspects. The detail of climbing the mast "halfway" occurs in most of the Texas variants, as does the hatchet in the captain's hand. It is unlikely that these elements were part of many separate incidents; the story has been subjected to communal re-creation as it has been orally transmitted.

If the story is getting farther away from an actually observed incident or a second-hand account of it, then why do most of the tellers say they saw it or heard it from someone who did? Linda Dégh has the probable answer: "Generally, if the chain of witnesses reaches a certain limit . . . there will be two alternatives. One is that the memorate succumbs as unlikely and unprovable. The other is that the receiver-sender simplifies the situation and unwittingly, or often with forgivable 'forgetfulness,' bypasses one, two, or more members of the transmission sequence."[27] As was pointed out earlier, the first- or second-hand account makes better

evidence to support the belief. Thus, the pattern described by Degh has important consequences for the function of memorates in tradition. The story maintains some of the characteristics of memorates in order to give it more validity even after it has started to become a fabulate, and if the Flying Dutchman is an earlier version, then a fabulate can become a memorate.

The fullest version of the climbing-the-mast memorate was one offered as a second-hand account. I asked Captain Doc Moots if he had heard about the captain who used to get mad and curse on his boat, and he replied:

> Oh, I know that. I ain't heard about it; I know it. I didn't see it, but I know that's the truth. Old Man Swensen was a captain from Sweden. He come to this country when he was a young man. I first knew him over in Georgia and Florida when he was fishing over there. Then when we came to Louisiana he was over there. This fellow was on the boat with him, on a rigging on there, and they had some—tore up a net, something or other happened, it went wrong. This Old Man Swensen, he grabbed a hatchet, climbed the mast, and says, 'Come on down and meet me halfway, you old whiteheaded son of a bitch." Now he done that.

This is a fuller, more detailed memorate than the other versions. It has more concrete narrative elements which make it both realistic and more entertaining. Captain Moots obviously has total belief in the tale even though he did not see the events it describes. He has more background information on the protagonist than most tellers of the story. The belief core is not as important in this version; the punishment consequence of the structure is missing, although judgment of the man's actions is still implied. The lack of punishment diminishes the importance of the supernatural in the memorate; without lightning striking or some bad-luck result, the presence of a supernatural force is only implied. Captain Moots explained how he knew of the incident: "I knew the guy [who was on board at the time], and he told me, and he said it actually happened." This remark is typical of memorate telling even when the person is far along on the chain of transmission. However, I believe Captain Moots' memorate is closer to an actual incident than any of the others I collected about climbing the mast. The details and background information indicate a direct familiarity with the event, but an even more important clue is the lack of a supernatural consequence. It is likely that the supernatural element was added after the story had been in oral circulation in order to emphasize the underlying value against blaspheming God. People within the fisherman's society

thought his blasphemy was sinful and should be punished. The memorate has developed to fulfill this need; if he was not punished in real life, he can still be punished in stories about real life. Captain Moots does not mention the punishment because he is repeating the story as he heard it from an eyewitness. The value or generalized belief is implied in his memorate, but it becomes explicit in other versions.

Belief narratives exist in different forms (memorate, fabulate) with varying degrees of belief and different relationships with core folk beliefs. The spectrum of legend is usually said to begin with memorate and end with fabulate,[28] but the possibility exists that this process was reversed with the blasphemous-captain story. The genre distinctions get hazy when the forms are seen in the context of a group who have many legends which interact within a complex system of folk belief, as is the case with the fishermen of the Gulf Coast. However, genre definitions are still valuable in understanding the interaction of narrative and belief in context. I collected a series of belief narratives about buying the wind (# 107) which indicate the variety of ways one belief can be expressed. Legends of buying the wind are traditional among seamen in different areas of the world.[29] Among the fishermen on the Texas coast the superstition can exist with no narrative: "They have an old saying that you could buy the wind. Whatever amount of wind you want, nickel, dime, quarter's worth. You turned your back and threw it overboard." The superstition also is expressed as a memorate, when someone claims to have seen it work:

> I know they throw coins over to buy a breeze of wind. I've seen that happen. I don't know if it had anything to do with it. I've done it myself, not a belief, but just to see if it would happen, and you know something funny; it usually does. And when it does it makes you wonder.

Here is the same ambivalence and inner conflict mentioned earlier as part of the legend-telling context. The captain who told this rationalizes his partial belief in the superstition, and the memorate helps him to maintain his belief. As a rationalization the memorate is interwoven with belief and behavior. Since this is a first-hand account, it provides the best kind of rationalization; he has tested the belief through his own experimentation. The next best evidence is to observe someone else: "I know one captain, we was working and he threw pennies overboard to get the wind." Since the teller's own behavior is not affected, the degree of belief is probably not as strong as in the previous example. A second-hand narrative could also exist, in which a person reported an experience told by another fisherman. I did not collect the buying-the-wind narrative in this form. Throwing coins

overboard is easily practiced by an individual; there is no need to report another fisherman trying it when you can try it yourself.

All of these examples could be labeled memorates, since they have the characteristics usually associated with this form. What are the characteristics which make it possible to identify the same basic story as a belief fabulate? This is difficult to answer because in their transitional stages the characteristics of memorate and fabulate are mixed, but I think a structural element should be considered along with the context of belief. The following account was related by a black captain on the pogie boats: "One fellow bought wind when he wanted to come in, but one time he got real bad weather and it scared him." The story is similar to the previous memorates; it is short, direct, and stated as fact, but it is removed from an actual experience, an observation, or even a second-hand testimony. He does not say he knows the man, he merely says "one fellow." As the story becomes farther removed from actual experience, it becomes more like a fabulate. This narrative has a new structural element not found in the memorates, a new consequence in the form of punishment. Instead of just getting wind, the man gets bad weather which scares him. This also implies an interdiction element (don't buy wind) which was not implied in the memorates. The memorates are closer in form to the superstition; they have a cause condition (throwing coins overboard) and a result (the wind will blow), but they do not have an implied interdiction or consequence of punishment. The fabulate version of the same belief has the full narrative structure. Legend structure is related to the distance from an actual event in that the punishment consequence would not be as likely to occur every time a fisherman threw coins overboard, and the punishment consequence is what implies an interdiction. The farther removed the narrative is from an event, the easier it is to add a punishment and an implied interdiction. Buying the wind suggests a supernatural connection between humanity and nature, but a punishment for buying wind suggests an active supernatural force beyond human control. Thus, the fabulate version is more supernatural than the memorate; empirical observation limits the supernatural quality of the memorate. The limits are fewer for the belief fabulate, since it is not based on observation or experience. This same structural development can be seen in the climbing-the-mast story, in which the memorate closest to the event lacks a punishment consequence (although the context provides an implied interdiction in the form of a religious value against blasphemy), and the more removed versions have the consequence of bad luck, bad fishing, or lightning striking. The climbing-the-mast story is also parallel to the buying-the-wind narrative in that the supernatural becomes stronger as the story becomes more removed.

Thus, we can use structure and context to help identify the changes in the development of a narrative from memorate to fabulate. But, just as there are changes within memorate versions of the same story, so, too, are there changes within the fabulates. There are three belief-fabulate variants of the buying-the-wind legend which illustrate this. Captain Moots, who told many legends, related the following:

> This is a true story, and this was sailing-boat days, back there when that's all there was. And this fellow had his wife and two kids on the boat, the way it was told to me. Now that's just a story that was handed down, but it's supposed to be true. And we had a place that we called Hell's Gate; I don't know where it got its name, but that's the name of that. It's where the *(pause)* Big Ogeechee and the Little Ogeechee come down and went into the sound. It was a cut there, and they called it Hell's Gate; it was just a cut you could go through. And this fellow down in a sailboat, and he throwed two bits overboard. He said, Old Man, give me a quarter's worth of wind. And it breezed up a little bit, and he said, "Aw, give me fifty cent's worth." And he threw fifty cents overboard, and it breezed up a little more. And he said, "If we're getting this much—" he said, "give me a dollar's worth." And he threw a dollar overboard. And when he got to Hell's Gate, and he made the turn, the boat capsized, and he was the only one saved out of the bunch. He lost his wife and kids. Now that is supposed to be a true saying. It happened at Hell's Gate. But I mean that's an old, old story.

Since Captain Moots is originally from Georgia, the story is set there; all of the places referred to are factual. This narrative is similar to the short belief fabulate about the man who bought wind and was scared by bad weather in that both have a punishment, but this story is much more fully developed, and the storyteller seems to have a greater degree of belief. The superstition is placed in a concrete setting; the fabulate provides a definite place, a real family, and concrete details. This gives the legend an air of verisimilitude, indicates the strong degree of belief, and provides evidence which Captain Moots needs to maintain his superstition. He repeated the place name, Hell's Gate, four times, and paused to think of the name Ogeechee. He would not have interrupted the story had he been telling it strictly for entertainment. The context of belief dictates the way the story is told. He repeatedly made statements as to the truth of the story and emphasized that he was telling the story as it was told to him. He may be expressing some doubt when he says "that is supposed to be a true saying," but this statement is probably just a recognition that our rational so-

ciety would not easily accept the story. He told the entire story in a serious tone, especially toward the end with the death of the family. In fact, the first time I transcribed the tape I missed "and kids" because he said it so softly. The punishment aspect of the legend is more severe in this variant than in any of the others I collected. This is another indication of the acceptance of the core superstition. Even though the narrative is removed from the event, it functions to support belief in the superstition.

In this particular version of the legend, belief and narrative are interdependent on a functional and structural level. The complete structural pattern of superstition is present, and the narrative contains the complete legend pattern. The severity of the lack consequence emphasizes the belief function of the tale and also points to an underlying social value. The man has attempted to interfere with God's own realm of nature, and he must be punished. The protagonist refers to God in an irreverent way when he calls Him "Old Man." This verbalizes the irreverence of his action in buying the wind. Belief fabulates can also begin with the violation of a norm, a point made by Honko about memorates.

Two other versions of this same belief fabulate show signs of lessening degree of belief and corresponding changes in style and structure. One version has concrete details, real place names, and an air of reality, but it does not suggest a strong belief. Robert Hollister, a shrimper originally from Florida, told me the following:

> Down the river from Fort Myers on the other side of the mainland is Sanibel Island. There was a man down there who carried the mail on the sailboat between the island and the mainland. He got becalmed one time, so he threw up a nickel and said, "O Lord, send me a nickel's worth of wind." The wind came and knocked down his masts. He got ashore all right and some of the fellows said he was real lucky. And he said, "I sure was. What if I'd throwed up a dime!" Wind was awful cheap.

This story does not have as many place-name references or concrete details as the previous story does. It also does not have as great an attempt at creating an air of reality because of the less severe consequence and the presence of a comic element. Since no one dies in the story, it is more appropriate to add a punch line, "What if I'd throwed up a dime!" This gives the story the structure and tone of a joke. It is told more for entertainment than to support a superstition. On the scale of distance from an event, it is more removed than a memorate, and it is also more removed than the previous fabulate. The value expressed at the core is still the same: the man calls out "O Lord," when he buys wind, so that the implied interdiction

is against interfering in God's realm. There is at least partial belief expressed which differentiates this fabulate from the final version of buying the wind.

An old retired bay fisherman, Max Edwards, told this version:

> An old sea captain, he was walking up and down the ship, the deck, becalmed, and he was looking. He wanted to get into port. So he reached down in his pocket, and he pulled out a half-dollar, and he throwed it overboard, and he says, "Give me a half dollar's worth of wind." By the time he got into port, why it blowed all his sails off with nothing left but the mast and the rigging left on it. And he says, "If you get that much wind for a half dollar," he says, "fifteen cents' worth would have been a plenty."

The other versions of this fabulate were told by sea fishermen. As was discussed in Chapter 1, the sea fishermen have a greater degree of anxiety about their occupation than the bay fishermen have. Sea fishermen have a corresponding greater need for belief in magic, which means they also have a need for legends to support their beliefs. Max Edwards was the only bay fisherman to tell a fabulate involving a magic superstition, and he told it as a joke. A real belief in buying the wind means nothing to him; therefore he can make fun of it by telling it as a joke. He makes no reference to God in the story, so that the central value of the other versions is missing here. There are important stylistic differences in the three versions of the fabulate which point to underlying differences in degree of belief; the first has the greatest belief, the second less, and the last none at all. The last version has no concrete details; no attempt is made to identify the character or to give an air of verisimilitude. The last two fabulates use the indefinite article to introduce the characters: "There was *a* man down there," and "*An* old sea captain," whereas the first version uses a definite adjective: "*this* fellow had his wife and two kids on the boat." It is important that the most-believed version has a specific man, but in the other two it can be any man. In many ways the last two are more jokes than legends. Instead of the serious consequence of the belief tale, one finds the punch-line structure of a joke. There is also a difference in the verb tense used in the three narratives; the last one uses the past, the present, and the past progressive: "he wanted," "he says," and "he was walking." The other two use past tense except for one sentence in the second story which establishes the setting, ". . . is Sanibel Island." The effect of using the past tense is to put the narratives into a historical context, thus adding to the belief function. When a fabulate is told strictly for entertainment this is not necessary; in fact this is another area in which such fabulates are closer to jokes: jokes can be told

in either the past or present tense. Belief legends tend to be told in the past tense; all of the other legends quoted in this chapter used the past tense.

The use of past tense is just one way the concept of the narratives as true history is revealed in the belief legends. There was one direct reference to history in the Friday legend: "You check your histories of seamanship." Other storytellers went to great lengths to establish a sense of the distant past: "That was back there in the rivet days . . ." "In them days . . ." "This was sailing-boat days, back there when that's all there was." "But I mean that's an old, old story." Establishing the setting of the distant past aids in maintaining belief in the legend by making it "historical" and giving it an air of fact. Also, if something supernatural is removed from the teller's own time and circumstances, he can believe it without actually seeing it. Of course, just the opposite is true of memorates; they get their sense of fact from being close to an incident, but they also tend to be less supernatural; at least this is true of memorates among fishermen on the Gulf Coast. Fabulates told only for entertainment do not have these devices for establishing a sense of history because they are not readily believed.

What causes a narrative that is believed to survive after belief in it has died? The buying-the-wind story, the Friday legend, the jinxed-boat tale, and the climbing-the-mast memorate have a common element which makes them survive. As I have already said of the climbing-the-mast tale, they all have a basic "narrative value" which makes them live on when belief has weakened or died. Honko says, "the same legend can in one area appear in the function of a fabulate and in some other in that of a belief legend."[30] The buying-the-wind legend certainly illustrates this point; it exists as a memorate, as a belief legend, as a fabulate, and even as a joke. The genre distinctions are blurred in actual context because these terms overlap. The fishermen who tell the stories do not make these genre distinctions anyway. Genre categories are definitely useful to the folklorist in understanding the relationship of style, structure, function, and context. However, I think we will never be able to make demarcation lines exact, because they are not precise within the storytelling context; genre categories remain useful abstractions to be tested by application to folklore as it exists in a culture.

The legends studied in this chapter have different characteristics, and this has led to the consideration of genre, but they also have important similarities, especially in terms of recurring patterns and themes. The most important similarity is that they all deal with the supernatural in some way, and this again shows the interaction of legend and superstition, which is also concerned with the supernatural. The Friday memorate suggests that

there is some force which causes bad luck when the fisherman makes a trip on Friday. He wonders what caused his clutch to fall out on a Friday, but he has no answer, only a rule to follow: don't start trips on Friday. The belief fabulate about Friday multiplies the taboo transgressions, and the force which causes the ship to be lost is mysterious and unknown. The memorates about the blasphemous captain who climbs the mast place the supernatural force in the context of religion by stating that the transgression is against God. The captain is punished for his actions just as the Friday taboo breakers are; the punishment is more understandable because it is in religious terms, but it still involves a supernatural force beyond human control. The captains who buy wind are also punished by God; they have attempted to influence the weather, which is controlled by God, and the very thing they have tried to control becomes the instrument of their own destruction. In the legend of the man who dies in the building of a ship, there is also a suggestion of the supernatural in that his spirit seems to cause a jinx on the ship. This legend is the only one in which no choice is involved; in all of the others the characters have a decision to make about their relationship with the supernatural world. They can choose not to start on Friday, not to curse God, and not to buy the wind, but instead they choose to break the taboos; they decide to interfere with or antagonize the supernatural force. The choice is a crucial factor: since a choice is involved, there must be something knowable about a man's relationship with the supernatural world, some rules he can follow. These rules are the traditional magic beliefs of the occupation. Practicing the beliefs keeps the fisherman from stepping over the line into the supernatural. The memorates and fabulates are mainly stories about men who choose to step over the line and the terrible consequences of their decision.

The best statement of the supernatural quality in legends is made, I think, by Max Lüthi:

> But the legend looks fixedly at the inexplicable which confronts man. And because it is monstrous—war, pestilence, or landslide, and especially often a numinous power, be it nature, demons, or spirits of the dead—man becomes small and unsure before it. The legend sketches suffering man, stricken and perplexed, questioning, brooding, explaining, but also struggling with a difficult decision, losing himself in wantonness or rising to a sacrificial act.[31]

Facing a numinous power and trying to decide how to cope with it are the central concerns of the fishermen's legends and superstitions and one of the major considerations of their occupational life. This concept relates the legends back to anxiety, which is such an important part of understanding

the magic beliefs. Anxiety pervades the fisherman's world because there are so many factors over which he has no control and no understanding. Why do some fishermen get big catches while others don't? Why does one boat seem to have more bad luck than others? Why was a friend or relative lost at sea while another fisherman was spared? The ultimate answers are unknowable mysteries which only a belief in the supernatural seems to explain. It is out of this need to believe in the supernatural that the magic beliefs and magic legends of the fishermen spring.

3. Empirical Beliefs

Red sun in the morning, sailors take warning;
Red sun at night, sailor's delight. (# 152)

Several fishermen recited this traditional weather rhyme, and many others knew it without the rhyme form: "We'd go by the sun a lot, too. If it come up red, you could look for bad weather. But if it settled red in the evening, then it would be good weather." Weather signs are used every day by fishermen, and are based on many different natural factors, such as the sun, the moon, and the clouds.

Mackerel skies and mare's tails
Makes lofty ships lower her sails. (# 164)

This traditional belief was also more often expressed in prose form: "The high clouds, lots of times there's clouds way up high in streaks. We call them mare's tails, and they mean that the wind is going to blow." "Mackerel skies" referred to high, "spotty" clouds and were also a sign of wind.

These weather signs are all examples of empirical beliefs which are usually based on tradition and on observation and experience of nature. They are practical aids used by fishermen in predicting the weather and finding fish. As opposed to magic beliefs, the structural relationship between the condition and the result is not usually causal; rather, it is indicational.[1] For example, scaly clouds in the sky (the condition) are an indication of windy weather (the result), not the cause of it. Empirical beliefs arise in ordinary fishing situations and not especially under dangerous conditions. There is uncertainty surrounding weather forecasting and finding fish, but the uncertainty is not so acute as that which is connected with magic beliefs. There is more individualization in empirical beliefs; each man has his own signs, but he also shares many with other fishermen; a great number of

signs are traditional in the sense that they have been passed from generation to generation over a wide geographic area.

The fishermen's attitudes toward empirical beliefs differ from their opinions of magic beliefs. They think of the empirical signs as "scientific"; they have proven the signs by experience over a period of years. Many of the signs seem valid, such as the belief that a circle around the moon means bad weather (# 132). The moon's halo is caused by light passing through the moisture in the atmosphere; a heavy amount of moisture in the air can be an indication of approaching rain. But a belief which often goes with this one, that the number of stars inside the circle indicates the number of days of bad weather (# 133) seems scientifically invalid. Scientific textbook knowledge is not important to the fisherman; he uses his own rational observation as a basis for his scientific knowledge. There is by no means universal agreement among fishermen as to which beliefs are valid and which are not; some of the most popular signs are doubted by certain people, who include them together with magic beliefs as "old superstitions." However, the majority of coastal fishermen make a clear distinction between magic and empirical beliefs.

Fishermen express this distinction in direct statements about the beliefs. As was pointed out in Chapter 1, a description of a magic belief is often followed by a denial of personal belief. On the other hand, empirical beliefs are often introduced with "My belief about it is . . ." After describing an empirical belief, fishermen say, "That's true. I've heard it and I've watched it. That's true." Other typical remarks associated with empirical beliefs are "That was for sure"; "This would hold up"; "And it happened that way, too"; "It's actually so"; and "You can predict it." Fishermen have no reservations about admitting personal belief in these signs, as they do with magic. Many men who disavowed any magic belief were firm believers in empirical signs and made statements such as "A man that's used to it can pretty well figure out what the weather's going to do. It didn't have anything to do with superstition." Magic beliefs are "superstition"; empirical beliefs are science.

The attitudes toward empirical beliefs of the two men discussed in Chapter 1, John Mihelich and Tony Racki, help to point up the differences between magic and empirical beliefs. Tony, who believes strongly in magic, does not have much need for empirical beliefs. He has heard most of the weather signs but has not assimilated them into actual practice. He would describe a sign and then say, "I never do pay no attention to it." John, who had nothing but scorn and derision for most magic devices and those who believed in them, reported several empirical signs which he practiced. He described the signs in detail.

> When you see the moon and a circle around the moon, well, you expect south wind. And then well, you see a lot of the time this circle around the moon, but it's got opening. You got to watch which side of the moon this opening is on; if it's south, you expect south wind; if it's north, it will be north. This is a pretty accurate thing. (# 137)

John's last statement is paralleled by like opinions of other signs: "This never failed." "These are all true." As with his attitudes toward magic beliefs, he believes only those things which can be tested by observation and rational thought. Although magic beliefs are supported in some men's minds in this way, the empirical beliefs are much easier to accept as rational. However, as Tony's attitudes prove, a man who accepts magic beliefs will not necessarily adapt empirical signs to his scheme. This can be explained on the psychological level of function. Such a man has a need for magic beliefs to relieve acute anxiety, but since empirical beliefs do not serve as strongly on this level, he does not need them.

Because of their empiricism, these signs can function with scientific methods much more easily than magic can. A fisherman uses both rational technology and empirical folk belief to aid him in his occupation. The two types of knowledge have, for the most part, merged and have not created the discord which exists between magic and science. Weather signs first came about when there was a lack of scientific means of forecasting and technological methods of communication. The fishermen talked of the past in explaining their weathersigns: "When I started we didn't have no weather reports or anything, but you could tell the weather." "Back in them days they had to go by weather signs because they didn't have radios or any communication." "It's only been since World War II that they've had sufficient forecasts. Back in the prewar days they had to know the weather." In the past, empirical signs functioned in a realm which science and technology had not yet entered.

Even after the advent of modern weather forecasting and boat radios, empirical folk beliefs persisted. Many fishermen even now do not trust the validity of weather forecass. "You can't go by the weather reports; they're for the tourists." The same man who made this statement also said, "Them signs haven't left; they're still there." Other fishermen expressed disillusionment with weather reports. "We used to listen to the weather reports and they were always wrong." "Weather forecasting in this part of the country is a waste of time. I depend on signs as much as weather reports." The last man quoted expressed a common feeling: coastal and sea weather forecasts are not as easy to make as land forecasts. Unexpected squalls can move in with no warning from the weather bureau; signs are the only way

to predict some kinds of weather. This man has a more typical attitude than those who condemn weather reports completely; he uses both official reports and personal observation of the signs in predicting the weather. An example of using traditional signs and technological equipment is the fisherman who reported, "Whenever you see them storm petrels, storm birds, coming in, you notice your barometer will start to drop." A storm is definitely coming when both the barometer and birds indicate it.

Traditional beliefs about the weather were used in varying degrees by fishermen, depending on how much science had taken over. One younger fisherman knew the signs but did not use them under ordinary circumstances: "If my radios were all out, I'd use weather signs." Empirical beliefs have taken second place to technology in this instance. Other fishermen have completely discarded traditional signs in favor of technology: "There's not too much they look for anymore. Now they just listen to weather reports." There is a practical explanation for this rejection of signs by many fishermen. As one man said, "It was a whole lot easier to go by the weather reports." Traditional signs have to be learned, and then nature has to be closely watched; listening to a weather forecast on the radio calls for much less active participation. One fisherman offered another explanation by saying the weather itself was not as important as it used to be:

> But I'll tell you the way it is today; we've got big boats and lots of power so we don't have to pay so much attention to these things today like we did years ago when we had small boats and not much power. You had a rough time getting home them days.

Technology has diminished the importance of weather signs by providing improved engines and bigger boats. Several fishermen I talked to are now using weather data provided by very sophisticated devices: "I get most of my information on weather right now from pictures off that satellite, and radar."

Most of the fishermen who do not use empirical signs still believe in their validity. One thing that makes it easier for a fisherman to accept traditional beliefs is that no one claims they are absolute. Fishermen say the following about the signs: "Most of the time that's the way it was." They never maintain that a particular sign would always come true; they only say, "They do to a certain point hold true." Others would say things such as "We knew what the weather was going to be the next day, not perfect, but close," and "They weren't far wrong either." Many fishermen put it on a percentage basis with such phrases as "nine times out of ten it works," or "ninety-nine times out of a hundred." If the percentage of accuracy is this high, a fisherman can depend on the sign, but if it does not work in a

particular instance, he has a built-in rationalization device to explain its failure.

There are fishermen who completely deny the validity of specific signs or of all signs. Some of them look upon the signs as interesting traditions but not as useful devices. One fisherman reported a weather sign as a rhyme but then added, "But that was just a saying; we didn't follow it." Another said, "We'll mention it to one another, but we actually don't use it." Specific signs would be described by certain fishermen who would then say, "That's a bunch of crap." One man said that just about the time he would find consistency in the signs, they would not work. The younger fishermen were the most skeptical of empirical beliefs. When I asked one of them about signs, he said, "Us young guys don't follow that stuff." As with magic beliefs, older fishermen are steeped in traditions on the sea and of fishing. The young men are more influenced by the nonfishing society, which ridicules these traditions.

Empirical beliefs are like magic in another important way: both are strengthened in the individual by internalization. This process of learning a belief in childhood and then through the years making it a part of the individual's system of beliefs was more effective in the past, since signs were more widely believed and used. Fishermen who indicated belief in signs often mentioned that they learned them in childhood from figures of authority: "My father was good on weather signs in the old days. He could more or less predict the weather better than a forecaster." After telling of a certain sign, several fishermen said, "My dad used to tell me that one," or "My grandfather talked about that." This early inculcation by men they respected enabled fishermen to internalize the beliefs more readily.

After the signs have been learned in childhood or acquired at some point during a fisherman's life, they are next tested by observation. There are many references in the testimony of fishermen which show that observation of nature is one of the most important ways for them to validate the empirical signs. Several fishermen claimed that they observed nature and devised their own signs. They said things such as "The way we figured it out," "I'm no weather prophet, but you can see it," and "I paid attention to it too. I got experience that's true." Following a report of a sign they would support it with "That's true; that's my experience." Other times they would admit ignorance of the validity of a particular sign: "I don't know. I no test that much." Of course observation and experience could also invalidate certain beliefs. "They always said a red sunset denoted a bad day, but I didn't find that to be true." "I've heard of that, too, but every time I tried to go by that, I got fouled up." One man who depended on rational testing for support of all his beliefs stated his findings on a par-

ticular sign quite succinctly: "I've never found any direct confirmation of that."

Since experience was so important in supporting the beliefs, naturally the "old-timers" who had the most experience were often cited in reference to empirical signs: "Nearly all the old-timers had solid knowledge too." "There was some of them old fellows who could tell the weather." As in all of their testimony on empirical beliefs, the fishermen will accept no final authority on these beliefs except their own judgment. "There's a whole lot of that old stuff that's pure bunk. But there's a lot of stuff the old-timers say. I tried out and from experience learned it." Others said they owed all of their sign knowledge to experienced fishermen. "Working behind older people the way I picked mine up." Fishermen who were not real believers in signs also mentioned the old-timers. One man related a sign in rhyme and then asked, "What the shit does that have to do with it? But the old-timers followed it." This fisherman does not practice the beliefs, but he remembers them because experienced men held them.

As in the case of magic beliefs, the empirical beliefs function on three levels: instrumental, psychological, and sociological. The psychological level is most important for magic beliefs, but instrumental and psychological functions are equally vital for empirical signs. Signs serve social functions only incidentally; in fact, no single empirical belief has a specific social function. One social function they serve as a group is to give fishermen an esoteric area of knowledge which separates them from non-seamen, and even this is not a very strong function. Many empirical signs are acquired from people who live on land, so that they are not an exclusively occupational holding. The signs also operate to support value-orientations mentioned previously in connection with magic beliefs. As forecasting and fishing aids they support the important value of mastery over nature. Empirical signs also aid fishermen in their striving for independence. Instead of depending on institutional weather forecasts, they can make their own prognostications using signs. All of these social functions are beneath the surface; a fisherman never avows any social purposes in his beliefs.

Traditional knowledge about weather and fishing serves a psychological function which also goes unavowed by fishermen. Signs work like magic in relieving anxieties produced by uncertainty. The area of difference is that the empirical beliefs do not relieve anxiety associated with dangerous and hazardous situations. They do help the fishermen cope with the anxiety due to the uncertainty of the weather and the location of fish. The fishermen made many statements about the unpredictable quality of sea weather. "Especially off this coast it's unpredictable." One fisherman in explaining

his dependence on weather signs said, "We had to survive." Bay and open sea fishermen both use empirical signs; bay men have a greater proportion of empirical over magic beliefs. The weather and the location of fish are important to both types of fishermen, so that their attitudes toward empirical signs are generally the same, and different attitudes arise in the area of magic. I collected every major empirical belief from both bay and Gulf fishermen.

As the classification *empirical* suggests, these signs often function on the instrumental level, although they serve a psychological purpose at the same time. An empirical belief does not have to work or be scientifically valid to function instrumentally. The important thing is that fishermen believe they work and are valid. Many of the instrumental beliefs do not work and are scientifically invalid, but so long as the fishermen avow their effectiveness in accomplishing a stated purpose, then they are instrumental. In certain cases, when a belief fails to work, the psychological function can outweigh the instrumental.

The most important instrumental function of empirical signs is forecasting the weather. I collected ninety-three different weather beliefs on the Texas coast. Some beliefs differed in that the same condition brought about slightly different results. For instance, a circle around the moon could indicate general bad weather (#s 132–134), an increase in wind (# 137), rain (# 135), or in one case a hurricane (# 136). There were eleven main areas of conditions which were watched by fishermen: moon, sun, clouds, stars, rainbow, tide, wind, general weather, fish, birds, and a miscellaneous area including cobwebs and smoke. Of these the moon was the most often cited condition, with twenty beliefs associated with it (#s 132–151). It was followed by the sun with twelve (#s 152–163), birds (twelve) (#s 206–217), clouds (nine) (#s 164–172), fish and other sea creatures (nine) (#197–205), wind (seven) (#s 186–192), stars (six) (#s 173–178), tides and water surface (six) (#s 180–185), general weather conditions (four) (#s 193–196), and rainbow (one) (# 179). There were seven beliefs in the miscellaneous category (#s 218–224). The moon is the most popular sign for several reasons. It is well known among fishermen that the moon has an effect on tides, which in turn affect their fishing. Traditionally a great deal of folk belief has surrounded the moon so that the fishermen have inherited some of their signs from long-established moon lore. The sun, clouds, and bird activities are all obvious to fishermen in their everyday occupation. Stars, tide, wind, and fish are also easily noticed at sea. Rainbows are more rare than other conditions, which explains the fact that there is only one rainbow sign.

There are thirteen results which weather beliefs predict. The result most

often mentioned is "bad weather." This general term usually means wind and storms. There were twenty-eight beliefs which predicted bad weather and twenty-four which forecast wind. The wind is the most important specific type of weather to fishermen. Many fishermen mentioned the fact that they could fish under almost any conditions except high wind, which causes choppy water and interferes with operation of their nets. Storms or squalls always contain high winds, and they represent the next highest number of reported bad results, with thirteen (including specific kinds of storms such as northers and northeasterlies). Hurricanes were the result element in seven beliefs. Hurricanes are extremely dangerous but do not hit the Texas coast every year. When they do strike, in modern times, there is ample warning days in advance from the weather bureau. Rain was the result of only five signs. This low number is explained by the fact that fishermen continue to work in rain as long as the wind is not blowing. Good or clear weather was predicted by eight signs; often this meant a lack of wind, and many times it was part of a belief which stated an opposite sign for bad weather. Being able to tell when bad weather was coming was more important to the fisherman than telling when it would end. Three of the signs predicted simply a change in the weather; two were forecasts of dry weather. There were various beliefs collected once each which predicted warmth, cold, no hurricane, no wind, and fog. Warmth and cold are not important to fishermen, but it would seem that fog would be a vital factor for any seaman. Modern fishermen have electronic guiding devices on their boats which make traditional signs of fog obsolete. This is just one of many areas where technology has replaced folk belief.

A closer scrutiny of specific empirical beliefs will illustrate the variety of signs in a fisherman's everyday life. The most common weather sign on the Texas coast is the halo around the moon. It can mean bad weather (#s 132–134), rain (# 135), wind (# 137), dry weather (# 138), or hurricanes (# 136). Wind, rain, and hurricanes are simply more specific kinds of bad weather so that in most cases there was consistency in the belief. The one man who indicated that the sign meant dry weather was outside the main tradition of fishing. He was a young party-boat captain who had probably altered the belief without realizing it. There was usually more inconsistency in other beliefs than was found in the moon-halo sign. Its very popularity and acceptance have helped to standardize it as a bad-weather sign. The more often people hear it, the more likely they are to remember it in its standard form.

Several fishermen added various details to the basic sign. The men who knew more details were usually older and more experienced. One old retired fisherman said, "How many stars in the circle meant the number of

days of bad weather" (# 133). Another informant said, "The closer the ring is, the closer the bad weather, the tighter the circle. The old-timers could predict the number of days, but I never come that close" (# 134). Thus, knowledge of the sign was not enough to make accurate predictions; it also took experience in observation. One other detailed account offers a distinction in the sign: "Circle around the moon and one side is open. It's going to blow from that direction. I mostly hear that. I can't really swear that's true" (# 137). With sailing vessels the direction of the wind was important, but now the direction is not important; the blowing wind disrupts fishing no matter which direction it is from.

The moon can be a sign of weather during certain phases. "Whenever the new moon is tilted, you can look for wet weather that month. If it is straight, you can look for dry weather. And this would hold up" (# 139). This sign is symbolic in that the moon is compared to a container with water in it. When the container is tilted the water spills out, and it rains. There is a related new-moon sign which depends on another comparison to prove the same result. "When the moon stands up it means good weather. When it's like this [points down] it's bad. Bad weather and you'll stay in your bunk" (# 140). In this case, instead of being conceived of as a container, the moon is compared to a boat: when it is sailing in a normal way, it means calm weather, when the fisherman can work; but when it is in a tilted position, the weather is bad and he will not have to work. A variant wording of the same sign has the same result but with a different explanation: "When the moon's laying down all the seamen got to stay up and see the bad weather, but when it's setting up all the seamen can go to sleep; we'll have good weather."

The phases of the moon were important in many ways, and fishermen acquired much of their moon lore from a belief in almanacs. The testimony of a retired fisherman is typical of the older men. "I have used an almanac. The almanac mostly goes by the phases of the moon" (# 141). Several men used the almanac as their major device for predicting the weather:

> The almanac from Morgan City has the weather flags in it on what the weather was going to be like each day, and this thing has been pretty truthful for the last twenty-five or thirty years. So I keep my almanac; I go by my almanac more than I go by what the weatherman says.

The fact that the almanac was printed matter added to its dependability as scientific evidence in the minds of the fishermen. One fisherman who doubted most magical beliefs thought that almanacs were useful: "Almanac, if you understand, it helps you for tides and things like that. That's educational; all the captains use that."

As with many beliefs, though, faith in the almanac is declining; most of the younger men do not use it. One man indicated this lack of interest in modern times as compared to his childhood:

> I never paid any attention, but my daddy and them, they read the almanac. And I don't know of too many people that even look at an almanac today. Most all drug stores had an almanac when I was a kid; you just went around and got one every year. You've got to know how to read one.

Although this informant said that almanacs are not used any more, he still had a personal faith in them which he revealed when he said that his grandmother had used the almanac to predict the exact day when his baby would be born, while the doctors had missed by fifteen days.

The almanac and some other empirical signs entered realms of a fisherman's life other than his occupation. This was more likely to happen with empirical beliefs than magic ones; the magic beliefs were for the sea and life on a boat, but the empirical signs could also be used on land. For instance, moon phases were used by some fishermen for planting in their gardens. Signs for hurricanes could be used on land as advance warnings. Some of the signs predict storms connected with cold fronts, "northers" in Texas, warnings of which would also be valuable on land. This functioning in occupational and social realms is only possible when nonoccupational society accepts or tolerates at least part of the lore.

The full moon is a source of signs. "Every full moon you have a weather change" (# 142). A related but more specific belief is "Two days after a full moon you'll have bad weather, especially in the winter" (# 144). The specificity of this sign makes it more instrumentally functional. One man gave a conflicting belief: "The weather's usually better on the full moon" (# 145). Contradiction was not unusual in beliefs which were only reported one or two times. These are often personal beliefs which conflict with another person's observation of nature. They do not have a strong tradition working on them to make them conform in form and content.

In one instance nature contradicted a moon sign in a decisive way, and at least one man then rejected the belief. "We would never have a hurricane on the dark of the moon [# 146]. When we had Hurricane Carla, that killed that theory." Carla (in 1961) was one of the largest and most destructive hurricanes ever to hit the Texas coast, and this fisherman could not accept a sign which had been so effectively disproven. An older fisherman had a moon-hurricane belief which he also based on observation: "Hurricanes come a week or ten days after the full moon. I've never seen one that didn't come then" (# 143). Part of the moon lore is based on a

cycle theory. The weather follows the moon in monthly cycles. "If you've got bad weather before a full moon, it'll get worse up until the full moon, and then gradually get better after. The same with good weather" (# 148).

The sun can also be a sign; the most popular one was the red-sun-in-the-morning rhyme (# 152). Another was "In the morning when the sun is red as fire you're going to get wind" (# 158). Since the wind is vitally important to fishermen, this sign could be more instrumental than the rhyme. As with many beliefs, there are contradictory signs. Instead of a red sunset indicating good weather, to some fishermen it meant bad weather or wind (#s 155, 160). One man had emphatic faith in this sign: "That's an old—that's way back. You have a clear sunset, you'll have clear weather. A red sunset and you'll have wind. That used to be the only guide we had for years. We go by that" (# 160). An approximately equal number of fishermen accept each belief and have faith in its efficacy. Despite the contradiction, each sign can still serve a function. The men believe it serves a definite purpose, and both groups can cite personal observation to support their belief. The contradiction is not usually apparent to them, but only to a folklorist who interviewed a great many fishermen. None of the informants mentioned any dispute with other fishermen over this belief, a fact which indicates that an individual is allowed to hold his empirical beliefs even if another person disagrees.

"Sun dogs" were a sign used by several fishermen on the coast. A retired fisherman first told me about them in Freeport: "About sun dogs—it looks like part of a rainbow on the side of the sun. Three days afterwards we would have some bad weather" (# 154). These were also described as spots of light around the sun, and they always meant bad weather. There was an interesting connection between the sun and the wind in the minds of a few fishermen. One of these said, "The higher the sun comes up the harder the wind blows, and when it sets they die down" (# 163). This is more of an observation than a sign used as an occupational aid.

Several fishermen used stars as weather signs. "When you see the stars kind of sparking that's a sign of wind too" (# 176). Unblinking stars are also a weather indicator: "You take the stars jumping you can look for some wind, and if they're steady you'll get good weather." One informant knew an old fisherman who used this sign to tell the direction the wind would blow: "Whatever section them stars was blinking in, he'd use in his prediction." Another fisherman knew how to use meteors as a wind sign: "Any night if you watch close enough, if you see shooting stars, the wind will blow in the direction they're going" (# 173). Stars were not as important as the moon for night weather predicting.

There was only one empirical belief which used rainbows, and it was commonly recited as a rhyme:

> A rainbow at night, sailors' delight.
> A rainbow at morning, sailors take warning. (# 179)

At times it was reported without the verse and in only half of its form. "When you see a rainbow in the evening you will have good weather the next day." There was another less well known rhyme which specifically predicted a cessation of rain:

> Rainbow in the evening,
> The rain's a leaving.

This agrees essentially with the other rhyme, since when the rain stops it is to the delight of a sailor. One other version of this seems to be a product of faulty memory:

> Rainbow in the evening,
> Sailors are leaving.

In all of these rainbow signs the favorable indication in the evening can act as a psychological uplift for a fisherman.

Fishermen watch tides and the surface of the sea as advance warnings of storms. A groundswell was a sign, but it had two different results. "When a hurricane is coming, there is a swell ahead of it" (# 180). A groundswell also meant a "northwester" storm to some fishermen. The hurricane belief can be used on land as well as at sea, but modern hurricane predicting has made the sign obsolete. Before scientific methods took over, the sign of a groundswell was extremely important and even contained more detailed ways of telling when a hurricane would strike: "Way back there the old-timers used to count the time between each wave, and that way they knew when the hurricane was coming" (# 181). One informant tried to remember the exact numbering system used: "The swells coming in, if it was eight to the minute, then they thought it was a hurricane coming. It was ordinarily ten or eleven. I might have that backwards." The lack of need for this method since it has been replaced by science has caused it to be forgotten, and gradually it will disappear altogether.

There are several ways fishermen use wind as a sign. "A light nor'wester wind means there's a storm coming up" (# 188). Two informants said this wind indicated a hurricane. A version of this belief had the wind changing direction: "If it blows out of the north and switches back to the west, it

was bad weather" (# 187). There was one rhyme associated with a wind sign:

> Rain before wind, take sails in.
> Wind before rain, let them hang. (#190)

This must have originated in sailing days; yet it can still be used as a strong wind warning. The wind is more important as a result than as a condition; there were very few wind conditions collected.

Signs based on general weather conditions were also few in number. The most widespread of these actually specified a condition: "Three fogs and you could look for a norther. Old-timers said fog on three days meant a norther was coming" (# 195). Some people mentioned that hot and sultry weather preceded a bad storm (# 193). Empirical beliefs are more effective if they provide a specific condition, an obvious sign; ones based on general conditions are not numerous or widely believed.

Almost as popular as meteorological phenomena for weather signs were the activities of birds, fish, and other sea creatures. Fishermen sometimes said that "spinning sharks" were a sure sign: "And you can tell how it was going to blow by the sharks twisting in the air. That was a sign of wind. And it would happen that way too" (# 197). Some men said the result was bad weather rather than specifying wind. A few fishermen disagree with this sign and have a more "scientific" explanation for spinning sharks: "I been out there long enough to know that an old shark jumping out of the water is trying to knock pilot fish off." But most of the informants who knew the sign believed it.

The porpoise has empirical beliefs associated with it as well as the many magic beliefs already mentioned. There is a correspondence between the two types of belief about porpoises, because in both cases the porpoise is a helpful animal. "The porpoise jumps a lot. Certain times he jumps different from when he's playing. When he jumps straight, you watch and the next day the wind will come from the direction he is jumping" (# 198). "But right before a norther, a porpoise will lift up and pop its tail on the water, and the way he pops his tail is the direction the wind's going to blow" (# 199). Porpoises as friendly creatures give warnings about wind, but the fisherman's enemy, the shark, also gives wind warnings. The warning is the vital factor, not the source of the warning. Six fishermen mentioned mullet or just fish in general as being signs of wind when they jumped. The mullet had to be jumping in a certain direction according to one informant: "You could tell when a norther was coming because the mullet would start jumping south" (# 200).

After a catch is pulled up on the deck, a fisherman may notice some-

thing unusual about the shrimp or crabs he has caught and use this as a sign: "When a northeaster is coming the shrimp turn red" (# 202). This sign may be a local belief, as it appeared mainly in Galveston. One fisherman watched the activity of shrimp: "If the shrimp jumped around when they were dumped on deck, it meant bad weather. That happened a few weeks ago" (# 204). Crabs could be used in the same way: "There's lots of that stuff you can watch. If you dump a bunch of crabs on board and them fellows is mean, the weather'll be bad" (# 205). Underlying signs of this type is a belief that animals and fish are linked to nature and the weather in a way that human beings are not. We can learn from animals about nature's ways. The link at times seems magical, so that these empirical beliefs are related to similar magic beliefs.

Several bird signs also correspond to magic beliefs. A bird landing on a boat can be an omen of death or bad luck, but it can also be a sign of bad weather: "Some people claim, it's like anything else you know, they claim that if a bird lights on your boat that you're going to have bad weather [# 206]. But I've had birds light on my boat, and I never pay no attention to it." Since this belief has so much magic about it, instead of being accepted as scientific, as empirical weather signs usually are, it is rejected by this fisherman. The same man was not skeptical about other empirical signs. Albatrosses, which are bad luck in magic beliefs, are bad weather signs as well (# 209). In fact, one informant mentioned them as bad luck and bad weather signs in the same sentence.

There is another bird, related to the albatross, which is variously called a storm bird, scissortail, storm king, or water turkey. It is always prophetic of a storm or bad weather: "When the scissortail or storm bird comes across the Gulf, you can look out for bad weather" (# 207). One informant said the bird made a noise which indicated bad weather (# 210). A related sign was the noise made by a loon (# 208): "When you hear the loon you figure on bad weather. And he's a pretty good weather predictor."

Seagulls are a much more common bird and are thus central to more empirical beliefs. The most prevalent seagull sign was "You can tell when you're going to have high winds because the gulls will go up real high and start circling. They know the boats are coming in" (# 212). Fishermen also phrased this belief to include any sea birds, not just seagulls. Fishermen said seagulls indicated bad weather by another activity: "The way we figured it out, we'd see the seagulls coming into land. That means bad weather was coming" (# 213). The same type of bird can be prophetic in more than one way. The popularity of these two beliefs and the faith men have in them indicates that when the activities described take place, storms or wind often follow. They also say that "When the seagulls are

swirling and squawking, that's a pretty good indication that there's going to be bad weather" (# 214). And "When the seagulls are hungry and eating up everything, there's going to be bad weather" (# 215).

Of the miscellaneous weather signs the most widespread had to do with cobwebs: "Cobwebs mean wind when the masts are full of it" (# 219). One man said they meant fog (# 220). The informants who mentioned this believed firmly in its validity, although it is difficult to establish a logical connection between cobwebs and the wind. Most of the empirical beliefs which are accepted have at least a surface explanation which satisfies fishermen as to their validity. The existence of the cobweb sign shows that even an empirical belief does not have to have a rational explanation behind it.

The ability of an individual to sense weather changes has no rational explanation; yet fishermen speak of men they have known who possess this instinct: "I worked with a man we called the 'walking barometer.' And that man, he was a judge of the weather; it was in his bones. He used to walk back and forth on the deck and scratch his head, and we'd say, 'We better get out our slickers' " (# 224). These weather prophets were most often the "old-timers"; not many young men were said to have this ability. Some middle-aged informants claimed to have special understanding of signs but not this inherent knack for the weather. This is one of the few weather beliefs which is not a specific sign. In a general sense, a feeling "in the bones" is still a sign of bad weather, so that structurally this belief still has a condition and a result.

Most of the empirical weather signs I have discussed are generations old and part of a long tradition, but there are two signs which are surely modern because of their dependence on modern phenomena. The Texas Gulf Coast is highly industrialized, especially around Freeport, Galveston, and Port Arthur. The chemical plants and oil refineries are visible from most ports and even from out at sea. The following sign was described by a fisherman in Freeport, where the plants are very close to the shrimp docks: "If the smoke from them plants comes out and lays down, it's going to be bad weather. If it goes straight up, it'll be good. I learned this from watching it. Most of the ones who live here know this" (# 221). An overcast would keep smoke low, so this sign seems to be accurate. The second sign connected with modern industry was collected in Palacios, which is near oil and gas fields. "There's something about the oil-well flares burning. If it's a white flame, they'll have a wind tomorrow. If it's a red flame, they say it'll be clear, not much wind" (# 222). As old beliefs are discarded because of the infringement of science and technology, new beliefs are invented based on the by-products of modern industrialism.

The second large area of empirical beliefs is aids in locating fish and shrimp. There are six conditions to be watched in finding fish: moon (#s 225–234), general weather conditions (#s 235–242), tides and condition of the water (#s 243–248), wind (#s 249–253), time of the year and day (#s 254–257), and miscellaneous signs including birds (# 258), oil slicks (# 259), and the activities of the fish (#s 260–263). There are just two broad results of this type of belief, good fishing and bad fishing. Specifically, good fishing could result because the fish were grouped together, because they were feeding, or because they were bigger than usual. The moon was again a popular sign. Many informants discussed what they call a "fisherman's moon": "A fisherman's moon is a full, clear moon" (# 225). There were varying explanations as to why a full moon brought about good fishing, for instance: "On a full moon the shrimp was bunched together. When it decreased they seemed to spread out." A full moon was better for shrimping than for any other type of fishing. One man specified the exact number of days when shrimping was good: five days before and five days after the full moon.

This belief was generally accepted as valid; it was one of those which fishermen supported with observation and experience. One informant who is now retired from active fishing tended to be skeptical. His explanation sheds light on the way that empirical beliefs are reinforced in the minds of fishermen:

> When the moon was full they was going to catch shrimp. That was for sure. I used to say, "Boy, I can't wait for the full moon to catch some shrimp." But, you know, they caught them all month. If they caught them on the full moon, the moon got credit. If they caught shrimp on the quarter moon, it didn't get credit.

Here is a skeptic who has analyzed the situation and made his own observations of the working of empirical belief. After scrutinizing the belief so carefully, he went on to say: "The last two Mays, on the full of the moon, they've caught bundles of shrimp. So there may be something to it." There is a need for positive signs of good shrimping, so that even a skeptical man tends to accept them.

The full moon is best for shrimping, but some nonshrimping fishermen said the dark of the moon is best for fishing. An old snapper fisherman offered an explanation for this belief: "When there's no moon the fishing is best. The fish are full on the full moon" (# 226). Another man specified that flounder were best caught on a dark moon. The darkness facilitated the fishermen's efforts to approach a flounder without disturbing it. This belief in fishing on a dark moon does not contradict the full-moon sign of

the shrimpers, because each type of fishing is different. Shrimp are caught in a net pulled on the bottom, flounder are gigged in shallow water, and snappers are pulled in by line.

There was a rhyme associated with the moon and fishing:

> Moon's in the west,
> The fishing's the best.
> Moon's in the east,
> Fishing the least. (# 227)

This might be an adaptation of a "wind-in-the-west" rhyme, but neither belief is prevalent on the Texas coast, although one fisherman said shrimping was best when the moon was in the west (# 228). There were several other diverse ways in which the moon was said to affect fishing. In these the moon was not merely a sign but seemed to be a causal agent. One man said the moon affected oysters: "Also we have noticed the moon has a lot of effect on oysters. If you plant them on a certain time of the moon, they won't grow as well" (# 233). Another man said the moon had a bearing on the type of shrimp which were caught: "Three or four days before and three or four days after the full moon we had more soft shrimp" (# 232). Crabs shed on the new moon, according to this same informant (# 234). The implicit cause-and-effect relationship between the condition and the result in these empirical beliefs relates them closely to magic beliefs. But the basic attitude of fishermen distinguishes between the two. They believe that the moon aids for fishing can be scientifically explained but magic beliefs cannot be.

General weather conditions were either favorable or unfavorable for fishing, and fishermen had to observe which were the best conditions. Before and after bad weather was a good time for fishing, according to some fishermen. No explanation was offered for good fishing preceding bad weather (# 238), but one man did offer a reason for it following a storm: "Just after a bad spell of weather, after a norther, you can go after the fish because it tends to bunch them. You can sack them up after a norther" (# 239).

Some beliefs were negative in that they offered explanations for the absence of fish and shrimp. One man said, "Shrimp know the weather's coming. They disappear when it's lightning and thundering" (# 237). This belief functions in two ways: as a weather sign and as a fishing aid. Two other explanation beliefs are "The first cold norther and they're [shrimp or fish] gone" (# 240). "The weather's just like a farmer. If you don't get your rain you won't get the fish in the bays" (# 241). Another man also said rain is necessary for an abundance of shrimp.

There was one rhyme associated with general weather for fishing signs:

Evening red and morning grey,
We're sure to have a fishing day. (# 236)

This is closely related to weather signs, since it could mean that the weather will be clear for fishing and not necessarily that the fish are abundant or biting. In fact, there is a verse connected with the one above which is definitely a weather sign:

Evening grey and morning red
Sure to bring rain down on your head.

A good weather sign is often a good fishing sign, since it means the weather will be conducive to fishing.

The state of the water and of tides has a bearing on fishing for a few fishermen. This seems to be a personal-preference belief, since only a few fishermen reported any one of these signs, and they were usually contradictory. Two fishermen said that fishing was better in muddy water (# 244), and another said it was better in clear water (# 245). An old bay fisherman declared, "The tides has a whole lot to do with it. Certain tides you catch the fish. I done my best fishing on the low tides" (# 246). But two other men stated their best fishing was on high tide (# 247) These beliefs are outside the mainstream of tradition, a fact which makes them less likely to be consistent and more likely to depend on personal whim.

As important as the wind is to a fisherman, there are only a few minor beliefs about it used as fishing signs. The one thing all fishermen know is that if the wind is blowing too hard, they cannot fish, but beyond this most of them do not pay much attention to the wind. Some thought a northeast wind was bad for fishing (# 249). One bay fisherman said, "You need an inshore wind for trout" (# 253). Another said, "A little light wind is the best" (# 250). One man gave a traditional rhyming belief but then doubted its validity: "Fishing's the best when the wind's in the west. Down here it's not worth a damn" (# 251). These personal signs are more predominant among bay fishermen, while Gulf fishermen have few of them. The open sea fishermen's beliefs are usually part of a widespread tradition. Since bay fishermen do not have as much contact with fishing traditions of the past, they have devised many of their own empirical signs on a personal basis.

Many bay fishermen expressed favorite times of the year for fishing, but no open sea fishermen indicated a preference. This can be explained by the fact that most of the sea fishermen are involved in shrimping, which is a year-round activity. During the winter shrimping is slow off the Texas

coast, but many shrimpers go to Campeche Bay off the Mexican coast to fish so that they can fish all year. The case is different for bay fishermen. Several indicated that the fall of the year was the best bay fishing season (# 254); one also said the spring was good (# 255). One bay man preferred summer fishing (# 256). Another old bay fisherman expressed his favorite time of the day for fishing: "Early in the morning and late in the evening is the best time for fishing" (# 257). All these beliefs, like some other types of empirical signs already discussed, are observations rather than specific fishing aids.

The miscellaneous signs of fish were also found among bay fishermen more than Gulf fishermen. The most popular of these signs was this one: "In the daytime we watched the birds. The birds are after the little shrimp. That's what you call the school fishing" (# 258). One of the Gulf shrimpers noticed a sign on top of the water: "I used to look for . . . a slick. I would never pass that area because it was an indication of shrimp" (# 259). Only one sign depended on the sense of smell: "Trout let out an oil that smells like watermelon" (# 260). When a fisherman smells this distinctive odor he knows that trout are near. Many of these miscellaneous signs are among the most empirical of the signs, and as such they serve definite instrumental functions. A slick on top of the water and the smell of trout are direct indications of fish, not just coincidental phenomena. But as far as the fishermen are concerned the coincidental relationships are just as valid, because they do not think of them as coincidental but as regularly occurring empirical signs.

Both types of empirical beliefs, weather signs and fishing aids, are used every day by most of the fishermen. Some of the beliefs are traditional, and others are personal. Bay fishermen have more of a tendency to use empirical beliefs than do open sea fishermen. Science and technology are infringing on some of the empirical signs, but they are still functional enough to be a vital part of a fisherman's life. Their primary functions are instrumental and psychological, and they only have a minor sociological function. Together with magic beliefs they form a complex system of occupational belief which is unusual in modern times.

4. Form, Transmission, and Change of Folk Beliefs

The weather rhyme about mackerel skies was reported by Fletcher Bassett in a book on sea lore published in 1885:

> Mackerel skies and mare's tails
> Make tall ships carry low sails.[1]

The wording of the rhyme as recited on the Texas coast is different:

> Mackerel skies and mare's tails
> Makes lofty ships lower her sails. (# 164)

The difference is slight, but this illustrates a common characteristic of oral transmission, the development of variant texts. By studying the changes which take place in folklore as it is transmitted from one place to another over a period of time, folklorists can better understand the differences in cultures which adapt the traditions.

A comparison of fishermen's lore of Texas with older fishing traditions indicates that both empirical signs and magic beliefs have changed. The hatch-cover belief (# 1) is a good example. Maurice Alley, a lobsterman from Maine who was sixty years old when Richard Dorson collected from him in 1956, gave the following account of the hatch-cover taboo:

> Turn a hatch bottom up that's bad luck, you'll lose the hatch and the hold, bad luck. You go to Boston or anywhere around Rockland. You go aboard one of them fishermen, turn the hatch bottom up, you'll go aboard the wharf in a hurry. Any vessel. They want you awful careful 'bout when they take hatches off you never turn one bottom up.[2]

Alley's testimony indicates how widespread the hatch-cover taboo was in New England at the time. Since commercial fishing has been in existence much longer in Maine than in Texas, Alley's description of the superstition represents an older tradition. When his version is compared with ones I

collected on the Texas coast, one difference and several similarities can be discerned. The belief in Texas is also widespread; I collected it more often (seventy times) than any other superstition. The degree of belief seems to be as strong as in Maine, since many Gulf fishermen who did not consider themselves superstitious still practiced it. The important difference is that the Maine version mentions a specific result, the loss of hatch and hold; whereas the Texas versions have only a general result, bad luck. Thus, even though the occupational tradition is strong and links exist between fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico and fishermen in the North Atlantic, significant changes also take place in the superstitions as they are transmitted.

These two examples show how change takes place in the content and structure of folk belief, but changes also occur in function, and all these areas are related. Function and dysfunction influence the form and transmission of folk belief in a fundamental way which brings about much of the change that takes place in the beliefs. Structure and diffusion in turn have a bearing on the function of belief as it is transmitted over a wide geographic area through a period of time.

The form which folk beliefs assume is on the surface varied and uneven; each individual expresses the beliefs in different ways. However, underlying most of them is a basic structure, which is not always apparent. Alan Dundes' structural definition of superstitions, quoted in Chapter 1, is worth repeating here: "Superstitions are traditional expressions of one or more conditions and one or more results with some of the conditions signs and others causes."[3] Examples of this condition-result structure have been offered in the chapters on magic and empirical beliefs. Dundes' structural classification, which divides the conditions into signs and causes, parallels the division made by coastal fishermen between empirical and magic beliefs. Beliefs in which the conditions are signs are usually empirical beliefs; those in which the conditions are causes are usually magic beliefs. Here is an important instance where function and structure support one another.

The fishermen, of course, are not aware of the structure which underlies their beliefs, but they are aware of the difference between causes and signs, and this distinction is important in the functioning process of their beliefs. When a fisherman harms a porpoise, on one level he *believes* that this causes bad luck (# 5), but on another cognitive level he *knows* rationally that the killing of a porpoise does not cause any change in a man's fortunes. It is this discrepancy between what he believes and what he knows that forms his attitude toward magic beliefs, and it all centers around the causality of the condition. On the other hand, jumping por-

poises are a sign that the wind will blow (# 198). They are not a cause, and thus the attitude of a fisherman toward this belief is different. On both levels of cognition he can support this belief; he believes this sign because he has empirically proved it, and he knows it to be true because there is a rational explanation behind it; that is, porpoises sense a weather change and begin to jump. This explanation may not be scientifically valid, but in the fisherman's mind it is rational and logical. Thus, the sign part of the structure makes the belief acceptable on both cognitive levels.

The cause-sign structure does not hold true for all magic and empirical beliefs. Some empirical conditions may cause bad weather or bad fishing. That the moon causes tide changes is an empirical belief because of the fisherman's attitude toward it; he knows and believes in it because the causality structure has a rational explanation: the moon's gravitational pull has an influence on tides. There are other empirical beliefs which have causal structures but which do not have logical explanations, and these could be classified as either magic or empirical. A bird landing on a boat supposedly causes bad weather (# 206). No one explained this as a sign, so it may be a cause. Yet it does indicate weather and not simply bad luck. The two men who reported this belief considered it skeptically; their attitudes would place it as a magic belief (cf. # 74).

A few magic beliefs have conditions which are signs. When a rat leaves a boat (# 67), it is not the cause of the disaster which supposedly follows but is a sign of it. This belief does not have a rational explanation except that the rats have a natural instinct of impending disaster, and most fishermen do not accept this as logical reasoning. Some magic beliefs could be either causal or indicational. A magic omen can suggest causality or merely be a sign depending on the personal belief of the fisherman. The albatross can be the cause of bad luck (# 73) if a fisherman so believes; another fisherman might think that an albatross is a sign of bad luck with no causality in his belief. Or an albatross can be a weather sign (# 209), in which case the sight of one is strictly an indication of bad weather. A fisherman will have faith in the weather sign because of his own experience and because of a rational explanation: storms drive these birds from their normal habitat. He may believe the magic omen, but if he sees the albatross omen as a cause or a sign of bad luck, then he does not have a rational explanation for it. The key to rationality for the fisherman lies in the relationship of the condition and result elements; bad luck as a result of a sign or cause is harder to rationalize than bad weather as a result. Magic customs can also have sign or cause conditions. If something went wrong at the launching of a boat, it would be a bad-luck boat (#s 42, 43). An accident at launching could be a sign that the boat would have bad luck, or the mishap

could cause it to be a jinx ship. Ultimately then the cause-sign structure depends on the attitudes of the fishermen. In this way structure is determined by context. If the belief functions as a sign, it has what Dundes calls a sign condition; if the same belief functions as a magic cause, it has a cause condition.

Some of the folk beliefs do not have the condition-result structure, and these I call generalized folk beliefs. For instance, the fishermen believe that "The porpoise will push a body to shore" (# 122). There is neither a condition nor a result in this belief. It is based on a generalized and widely accepted concept about porpoises being the friends of fishermen. The porpoise is not a sign of anything here, nor does it cause anything to happen. There were only a few such generalized beliefs.

Most of the beliefs which I collected on the Gulf Coast fit Dundes' condition-result structure, but the structure should be considered in light of the attitudes of the informants and the functions of the beliefs. As Michael Owen Jones points out in his criticism of Dundes' structural approach to folk belief,

> The student of folk belief must take into account not only the text but also the integration of traditional knowledge and action into the broader cultural framework, the way in which beliefs are related to the life experiences of the individual, and the social context within which the beliefs occur, since focusing on beliefs in isolation tends to distort or detract from their meaning and function.[4]

For instance, in many cases, simple statements about customs appeared to lack the underlying structure, but when complete contextual information was analyzed, the condition-result was there. The blessing of the fleet was mentioned often: "They have a blessing of the fleet in Palacios and in Freeport" (# 105). This bare sentence suggests a condition, thus conforming with Dundes' theory that "condition is of prime importance."[5] Before the specific condition and the result can be clearly ascertained, the comments and opinions of many fishermen have to be analyzed. Only then can the condition be seen as a sprinkling of holy water by a priest in a formal ceremony which causes the result of the protection and care of God. The underlying structure and the psychological nuances of the belief are missing in the simple statement, and the intricate feelings of Protestants toward the custom are not even suggested. Structural analysis has to be combined with analyses of the people, their society, and their culture.

Structure and transmission are intimately related to each other, since structures change as traditions are transmitted. In order to determine how

transmission has affected form and content, the traditional elements of the folk belief of Texas coastal fishermen must be investigated. How old are the folk beliefs of Texas fishermen, and where do they come from? In answering these questions it is not necessary to delve into primitive myth and ritual for origins, but only to find immediate traditional predecessors in older fishing and sea-oriented communities. Most of the magic beliefs are traditions which can be traced back at least to the nineteenth century. The taboos seem especially traditional; for instance, Bassett's 1885 book mentions the hatch-cover taboo (# 1) as an old belief in England.[6] The whistling taboo (# 2) is reported by Bassett as being an old tradition among sea-faring men.[7] Other traditional taboos on boats are carrying a black suitcase (#35),[8] and leaving on Friday (# 3) (first reported in 1553).[9] Bad omens have been widespread among sailors since antiquity. Dorson collected several omens in Maine. Rats leaving a ship are a bad omen (# 67);[10] bad luck at first means bad luck will follow (# 61).[11] Bassett cites porpoises as good-luck omens (# 70),[12] and sharks as bad omens.[13] Dorson heard traditional tales associated with buying the wind (# 107),[14] and Bassett traces this belief back to antiquity.[15] Other control devices for nature and wind are old traditions. The belief in breaking up waterspouts with the sign of the cross (# 115) was first recorded in 1637;[16] whistling for wind (# 106) is found as an old belief in England, Sweden, France, Germany, Greenland, Fiji, and India.[17] Texas sea fishermen, then, are a part of a long, continuing tradition of the sea.

Empirical beliefs also include traditional signs used by fishermen and sailors for generations. Bassett discusses the moon, the circle around the moon, shooting stars, seagulls, and porpoises as sailors' weather signs.[18] I collected most of the magic and empirical beliefs listed by Dorson and Bassett on the Gulf Coast. Many of the weather signs I collected can be found inland as well as at sea. Most of the weather signs have parallels in the folk-belief section of *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*.[19] For instance, the "sun-dogs" bad-weather sign (# 154) corresponds to Brown belief number 6157. Of course, many weather signs can have long traditions on land and on the sea. The rainbow sign (# 179) was reported in the Brown collection as numbers 3476 and 6124–3127. Since North Carolina is a coastal state, the belief probably appeared on the coast and inland as well.

The sea-oriented traditions of fishermen, then, have been transmitted from older fishing communities to newer ones as fishermen have migrated along the coast. The beliefs first came from Europe through the migration of sailors and fishermen and were adapted on the northeast coast of the United States. Almost simultaneously the beliefs were probably finding a

home in the southern coastal states as well. Fishermen's folk beliefs did not come into the Gulf Coast states until fishermen from older communities migrated into the Gulf area. In Texas this did not take place until the late nineteenth century, and the traditions were continually refurbished by new migrations such as that of the shrimpers in the 1930's and 1940's. The beliefs and legends were passed on mainly by oral means, but in a few instances written accounts were part of the transmission. Most of the fishermen said that they heard the beliefs when they were children, or were told the practices and legends at some point in their fishing careers. But a few men indicated written sources for the traditions such as the *Reader's Digest*. Several said they had read of the practices in seamen's manuals, and, of course, they consult the almanac for certain weather signs.

The strength and vitality of the fishermen's traditions are proven by their survival over a great many years and by their transmission from continent to continent and along vast distances of coastline. The existence of traditional folk beliefs among fishermen of today contradicts one of Bassett's theories:

> The old type of sailor, who believed in the mermaid, the sea-snake, and the phantom ship is fast disappearing, and, with gradual substitution of the steamship for the sailing vessel, he is being replaced by the mechanical seaman, who sees no spectre in the fog, nor sign of disaster in the air, or beneath the wave.[20]

The modern seaman may not believe in mermaids and monsters, but he does believe that there are bad omens, that he can control wind, and that there are signs "of disaster in the air."

There are certain social, cultural, and individual forces which bring about change in folk beliefs. Some of these have been briefly mentioned in previous chapters, but they need to be analyzed fully. Different kinds of changes take place in the beliefs and in the society which affects the beliefs. The beliefs themselves can change in structure or in function; some beliefs can degenerate, others can disappear completely, and some new beliefs can appear. Equally important and inherently linked to the internal changes in the beliefs are the changes in attitude of the group who hold the beliefs. These changes in attitude often determine the acceptance or rejection of the beliefs by the society. Functional changes can be discerned in the beliefs and in the attitudes. Change of attitude can bring about a change in the function of a particular belief, and correspondingly an internal modification of a belief can bring about a change of function in the attitudes of the people. Complicating this interaction even further is

the role of the individual as a transmitter of lore; the beliefs can be changed through faulty memory or through the psychological conflict about folk beliefs which exists in the transmitter's personality structure. These three areas, society, culture, and the individual, are intertwined and have both a separate and combined bearing on folk belief.

For purpose of this discussion, society and culture will have to be clearly delineated; I am following Clifford Geertz's distinction between the two. *Culture* is an "ordered system of meanings and of symbols, in terms of which social interaction takes place"; it is "the framework of beliefs, expressive symbols, and values in terms of which individuals define their world, express their feelings, and make their judgments." Folk beliefs would be a part of this framework, since they are symbolic expressions which often reflect values. *Society* can be defined as the "pattern of social interaction itself. . . . the ongoing process of interactive behavior"; the social system is the form which culturally directed action takes.[21] Folk beliefs would also be a part of the social system, since they function within social interaction in actual situations of human behavior. A person who actually practices a folk belief is doing so on the societal level. Culture is what people pass on from generation to generation; society is the putting into action at any particular time of what has been passed on. These two levels are not always well integrated; at times societal pressures come into conflict with cultural beliefs. It is this area of conflict which brings about some of the changes in folk belief. This is a two-way process: society changes culture and culture changes society.

The fact that the cultural beliefs arise as a means of coping with anxiety in situations which require action at the moment grounds them in societal behavior. But, as Evon Z. Vogt points out, cultural values immediately begin to change them: ". . . ritual patterns which emerge initially as responses to critical areas of uncertainty in a given situation of action are elaborated and reinterpreted according to certain selective value-orientations of the culture."[22] The best example of this among fishermen's beliefs is the influence which the value-orientation of scientific-rational thought has on specific beliefs. The hatch-cover taboo (# 1) is magical in its traditional form. As was pointed out earlier, Maine fishermen believe that this action will bring about the loss of the contents of the hatch.[23] But many fishermen alter the taboo to give it a rational explanation. The hatch cover is not supposed to be turned upside down because it is not good seamanship; it may trip someone on the deck. The whistling taboo (# 2) has also changed under this process. Originally the belief was purely magical, and the result was to bring wind (# 106), but now many fishermen give the taboo a rational basis. They say that whistles are used for signals on a boat

and that indiscriminate whistling would cause confusion. This may be true, but it does not alter the fact that magic elements are in the belief. Many other examples of the rationalization of magic beliefs have been discussed in preceding chapters.

The rationality value-orientation also works on empirical beliefs, in a slightly different way. Nearly all the empirical beliefs are said to be rational. Unlike the magic beliefs, they do not arise from extreme anxiety situations and are thus more likely to be thoughtfully considered at the time they are used. This is a case of the value-orientation working at the same time as social behavior. There is a value influence on empirical signs after the basic sign has been stated. This is the process whereby fishermen prove the sign by empirical observation. If it were not for the rationality value, there would be no need to prove the signs.

Other cultural values do not change beliefs but are basic to the very situation which gives rise to them. For instance, the value of fear and respect for the sea does not alter any specific beliefs because the beliefs conform to this value at their very inception. This is also true of the other basic values, mastery of nature and independence.

Culture can influence beliefs in ways other than value-orientations. One basic influence is the alteration which beliefs undergo as they move through distinct regional areas. The best illustration of this is speech taboos on board boats. Bassett lists the following taboo words on boats in England and Scotland: *rabbit*, *dog*, *pig*, and *horse*. *Horse* and *pig* survived transmission as taboos to North America. One of the sea fishermen originally from the northeast mentioned them as beliefs there, although he had never heard them in the Gulf. The regional change in the taboo came about when it reached the southeast United States. Here fishermen made the native *alligator* a taboo word on boats, and the taboos surrounding *horse* and *pig* were completely discarded. *Alligator* as a taboo word has been transmitted along the Gulf Coast into Texas, where the animal is also familiar.

Societal action has an effect on cultural beliefs in certain ways. Technological advances can be considered a part of the social structure with a link to the cultural framework because technology is the putting into action of scientific beliefs. New machines, new means of communication, and new ways of predicting weather have a strong influence on folk beliefs, especially empirical signs. The gradual loss of interest in almanacs has come about because of new weather-forecasting techniques. Pogie fishermen no longer use as many traditional signs for fish since they have been provided with airplane spotters. Motorized boats have brought about one of the more striking changes in function in the buying-the-wind belief (# 107).

The original purpose for throwing a coin overboard was to buy wind for

the sails, but when motorized boats took over from the sailing vessels, the belief was merely an old relic until a modern function was given to it. I asked one informant why fishermen bought wind now. He replied, "Because they done been working probably a couple of weeks, hard and tired. And they was on salary, see, it wasn't piecework. And naturally if the wind would blow, that would give them time off." This new function is vital to the occupational life of the fisherman, especially to the deckhand who works a straight salary; it is to his own self-interest to get time off without losing his pay. The social function enables a worker to believe that he can usurp the boss's power by having control of natural forces.

Function does change at times, as in the case cited above, but more common is the loss of function. If a belief loses its primary function, it may die out completely. As Jan Vansina points out, "if a testimony had no purpose, and did not fulfill any function, it would be meaningless for anyone to pass it on, and no one would pass it on."[24] Transmission of a particular belief could be halted if there were no reason to transmit it. This has not happened frequently with fishermen's beliefs because magic beliefs serve a psychological function and empirical beliefs have an avowed instrumental function. The buying-the-wind belief was collected without its modern function of getting out of work being reported, but in those cases it had still another function, entertainment. Bay fishermen especially have no use for its psychological or instrumental function, but they have retained it as a tale about old sailing days which they use to entertain people.

There is another explanation for the bay fisherman's lack of knowledge of many sea traditions. Not only do the beliefs not have a vital function for him, but they also have not been transmitted as readily to the bay fisherman. The process of the transmission of traditions takes place mainly among open sea fishermen; bay fishermen do not have much contact with this tradition.[25]

Besides the social and cultural influence on beliefs, individual personality also plays an important role. As was pointed out in Chapter 1, some individuals have a greater psychological need for magic beliefs, and they are more likely to acquire and transmit these beliefs in detail and in the same form they heard them. On the other hand, individuals with little or no need for the beliefs subject the beliefs to faulty memory in transmission.[26] For instance, traditional wind-making beliefs once had a Faustian element, according to Bassett: "The weather-makers all derive their power from the same source—satanic intervention in the control of the elements."[27] Specifically, the devil enters the whistling-for-the-wind belief (# 106) because sailors think whistling is a mockery of the devil.[28] Originally sailors

bought the wind (# 107) from the devil, but this part of the belief is not found on the Gulf Coast. These circumstances have been forgotten because modern seamen do not have to have a specific supernatural explanation for controlling nature. Living in a rationally oriented world they try not to think of any of their beliefs as supernatural.

Several other beliefs have undergone loss of elements in transmission probably due to faulty memory. The petrel bird was associated with St. Peter in Europe and was supposed to walk on water,[29] but all beliefs about petrels on the Texas coast are void of these details. Dolphins were once thought of as a symbol of Christ and also as typifying the moon,[30] but these elements have been lost in transmission, and dolphins are good-luck animals and weather signs without the explanatory symbolism. Friday was traditionally avoided as a beginning day for voyages because the crucifixion was on a Friday.[31] As with the petrel and dolphin traditions, this belief has been secularized in its transmission. Fishermen, even Catholic fishermen, no longer think of the Friday taboo (# 3) in religious terms. Catholicism has weakened as an influence on all aspects of life, and the Catholic associations for these beliefs have gradually been forgotten. This is so even among a large percentage of Catholic fishermen.

Individual, cultural, and social influences combine to bring about change in structure. There are two basic ways in which the structure of a folk belief can change: the alteration of the condition or of the result. Most of the evidence points to a greater modification in the result element of the structure. Alan Dundes offered this as a tentative theory of the change of structure: "If there is any kind of evolution of superstition, it well may be from specific results to indefinite results to the omission of any stated results."[32] There are many beliefs on the Texas coast which when compared to beliefs in earlier collections lend support to Dundes' thesis. The collections of Bassett and of Elsie Clews Parsons[33] definitely represent an older fishing tradition, and if Dorson's does not, because of its more recent publication date, it is still representative of a geographic area where fishing is very old.

Several beliefs illustrate changes in the result. The hatch-cover taboo (# 1) is one. Another is the whistling taboo, in which the specific result of bringing wind (# 106) has changed to a general result of bad luck (# 2). Bassett reports the whistling belief with its specific result, but perhaps the fullest example of it in older tradition is Parsons' personal observation of it on a sailing ship in South Carolina:

> As we sailed the early hours of the morning to Savannah, the wind fell; and now and again Henry Bryan would whistle for it—a short

> calling whistle—as one whistles for a dog. And he would address the wind directly: "Come heah wind! Why you hidin' away in dat sail."[34]

I collected this belief without the full specific result nineteen times and in its full condition-result form twenty-four times. The whistling belief may be in a different stage of structural evolution which is not as far advanced as the hatch-cover taboo. The whistling belief is a taboo when it is without its specific result, but when it was reported with the specific result it was not a taboo, but a control device instead. When the whistling belief was in narrative context, another specific result was mentioned, a punishment of having sails and masts knocked down for trying to control nature. This specific result has been lost in all but a few cases. Thus, the condition, whistling, has remained in tradition in one form or another, but both results, wind and punishment, have been slowly dropped.

The result changes more readily than the condition because the condition is more important and resists change. This is especially true in magic beliefs, since conditions are apt to become more vague in empirical beliefs. The condition is more important in magic beliefs because it is usually a cause; it is what brings about the result. There would be no result without the condition. This was not true in most of the empirical beliefs; weather or fishing would be bad or good without the conditions; the conditions were simply indications, not causes. Magic-belief results became more vague because their importance psychologically did not depend on specificity. The fishermen need either a warning of bad luck or positive ways of bringing good luck. The exact kind of bad or good luck is not important on a psychological level. This explains why the results have a tendency to change in magic beliefs, and why the conditions are more likely to change in empirical beliefs.

This does not mean that the empirical beliefs all have specific results; many of them have vague results, but it is hard to determine if these are part of an evolutionary pattern. Many of the weather signs collected on the Texas coast had vague results, such as "bad weather," instead of having definite results such as rain, wind, or storms. But further investigation showed that the informants thought of bad weather as storms and wind. It was not important to them exactly what kind of bad weather was expected because any storms or high winds would interfere with their fishing. Here function determines the structure of a particular belief; if a specific result is not needed, it is not used. Specific results and vague results were reported for the same sign in many instances so that it was difficult to tell if the belief results were becoming more vague. In comparing these weather signs with the corresponding beliefs in the Brown collection, I

found that they were alike in their mixture of specific and vague results.

The structure of empirical signs does show a possible change in the condition element. Only a few informants reported specific details found in the conditions of several major beliefs. For instance, a ring around the moon was the extent of the condition according to thirty-seven of forty informants (#s 132, 135, 136, 138). Three men gave specific details: one said the closer the ring to the moon, the closer the bad weather (# 134); one mentioned that the number of stars inside the ring indicated the number of days of bad weather (# 133); and another said if one side of the ring was open, the wind would blow from that direction (# 137). These men said the old-timers used the more detailed versions. This may mean that the specific condition has evolved to a vague condition. Many informants have forgotten the specific names of "mackerel skies and mare's tails" (# 164) and call them "scaly clouds" or "streaky clouds." Only two fishermen out of fourteen knew the specific information about a porpoise jumping indicating the direction the wind would blow (#s 198, 199). There are two interconnected factors which explain the loss of part of a specific condition, loss of function and faulty memory.

Weather signs in general have become less important on the instrumental level of function as science and technology have advanced. In this atmosphere of less need, faulty memory was more likely to have an effect on the structure of the beliefs, as it did in the cases cited above. The conditions of the magic beliefs did not become more vague, except in a few instances, because their more vital psychological function has kept them circulating widely. If one person forgot a specific detail, someone else would probably correct him.

The evolution of magic beliefs from specific results to vague results is supported by the evidence collected on the Texas coast, but this evolution is not absolute; it can be postponed or completely averted, as the buying-the-wind belief has shown. When sailboats disappeared, the belief lost its main purpose, and it could have lost its specific result, as whistling for wind has. But when deckhands adapted the old belief to buy wind in order to get through working early, the specific result was retained because the modern function gave the belief vitality. Thus, the evolution of magic beliefs toward indefinite results can be stayed by a renewed vitality and interest in the belief.

Other areas of traditional belief besides structure are influenced by culture, society, and the individual working together. Society and culture create a state of mind within the individual which has an important bearing on folk belief. When pressure from society is put on the individual which is counter to the individual's own psychological needs, a state of

mind results which has been called *dissonance* by Leon Festinger. Cognitive dissonance arises when a belief of a person is continually proved wrong by evidence. The usual reaction is to discard the belief, but under certain conditions the belief will be retained. According to Festinger, a belief will be retained when "the belief is difficult to change, and there are a sufficient number of persons with the identical dissonance so that social support is easily obtainable."[35] This concept can be applied directly to the fishing community. Scientific evidence and the attitude of rational society continually prove the fishermen's magic beliefs incorrect, but members of the fishing community act together to provide social support for the beliefs despite what outside society thinks of them.

Dissonance is at the root of many of the changes in attitudes and folk belief which have been previously mentioned. The rationalization of beliefs is a direct result of the dissonance created when a need for magic meets the rational attitude of the dominant society. The denial of magic beliefs by some fishermen is created by their own internal dissonance. Some structural changes have a relationship with dissonance. The evolution of beliefs toward vague results has come about partially because some of the specific supernatural results were causing dissonance between believers and nonbelievers. There are two kinds of dissonance then: external dissonance between two groups or two persons and internal dissonance, often brought about by external dissonance, but existing within the personality structure of an individual.

Dissonance theory also has a certain bearing on function, as Rosenthal and Siegel have pointed out: "Dissonance theory provides a dynamic set of propositions which extends the scope of Malinowski's hypothesis that magic aims at technical control over the physical environment."[36] Magic does not always function as it should; it does not always fulfill its avowed purpose, and when magic fails, dissonance arises. The efforts to overcome dissonance enable a belief to continue functioning. For instance if a fisherman performs a good-luck ritual such as driving coins into the bis (# 83) and still experiences bad luck immediately afterward, internal dissonance will arise in his mind. But in the effort to resolve this dissonance he may find some other explanation for the bad luck, such as the breaking of a taboo before the trip started, and thus reinstate the good-luck ritual as a viable belief. It will continue to function as an effective anxiety reliever on the psychological level because the dissonance has been lessened to some extent.

External dissonance also arises in functional situations of magic belief. A fisherman must overcome the external dissonance between himself and the nonfishing society before his beliefs can function effectively. The way

he usually does this is to ignore the rest of society and keep his beliefs to himself, but this cannot always be done. Then he calls upon all the devices I have already discussed. He uses legends as historical evidence to support his beliefs. He finds sources from nonfishing society. He rationalizes his beliefs as being good seamanship and not magic at all. These efforts are directed toward decreasing dissonance in order to have a clear function for the beliefs.

Festinger's dissonance theory and Geertz's idea of social and cultural discontinuity have a common conceptual base which when applied to folk belief brings about similar conclusions. The discontinuity which exists between a social structure and a cultural framework could be compared with external dissonance; whichever label is attached to the phenomenon, it has a profound influence on social change and folk belief. Geertz also speaks of the tension between social integration, cultural integration, "and a third element, the pattern of motivational integration within the individual which we usually call personality structure."[37] When this third element is brought into the scheme, it provides a close parallel for internal dissonance, and this concept also is vital to change and folk belief. Social and cultural change are especially apparent among certain ethnic groups that form a part of the fishing community on the Texas coast, so that the theories of Festinger and Geertz take on added importance when applied to the folk belief of these ethnic groups.

5. Folk Beliefs in Ethnic Groups

Joe Garibaldi, a thirty-six-year-old Italian-American fisherman, talked to me about superstitions at a fish house on the docks in Galveston. He was born in the United States, but he is familiar with ethnic beliefs which fishermen brought from the old world. "A red cloth is waved to scare evil spirits away by old Italians. Some still do it" (# 85). He laughed and disclaimed any personal belief. His fifty-six-year-old friend Tony Caruso added, "Some of them believed that the red flag was like voodoo. Even young people still do it." The two men disagreed about how widely practiced the belief was; my own observation indicates that some younger Italian fishermen practice the belief without openly avowing it. The ethnic traditions may be weakening somewhat among the younger men, but some are still being carried on today. Other beliefs from Europe have been lost or altered in the United States. This is true of the traditions of other ethnic groups engaged in fishing on the Texas Gulf Coast.

Yugoslavian-Americans have brought knowledge of traditional weather signs with them, but not all of them are still practiced. John Mihelich gave me several weather beliefs and then said, "I learned that all from the old-timers back in Yugoslavia." Later he mentioned more weather signs and added, "These are all true in the Adriatic." Some of the signs depended on topographical features of his homeland which do not apply to the Texas coast: "In Europe, and this never failed. We got a big mountain separates the mainland from the coast. When the clouds are solid there we have bad weather." John knew Italian weather rhymes which were used by Yugoslavian fishermen in the Adriatic Sea: "Rosa de ciera, bon tempo si spera [his spelling]. Red in the evening, you expect good weather." This would correspond to the English "Red sun at night, sailor's delight" (# 152). The other Yugoslavian-Americans I interviewed knew empirical signs which were typical of the Gulf Coast. John remembered the old signs as interesting and accurate, but he no longer had a specific use for them. When a

fisherman changes location he must adopt new weather signs to fit that region.

The black pogie fishermen share many occupational beliefs with white fishermen, but they have few superstitions which can be classified as African-American in origin. Their racial identity is important, but it is only indirectly related to their occupational folklore. One belief I collected from several of them (# 9) does seem to be from African-American tradition since I collected it from only one white fisherman. One deckhand offered this version of it: "Some people say you kill a sea turtle on a boat, it'll bring bad luck." Another deckhand said if you even brought one on board, it was bad luck; and a captain said cleaning a turtle for eating was bad luck. This belief could be related to one Newbell Niles Puckett found among southern blacks: "You should never kill a turtle; he will come back and haunt you. . . ."[1] If the beliefs are related, then the supernatural result of haunting may have been dropped in transmission, and in the coastal context the turtle has become a sea turtle. The other beliefs I collected from black fishermen are the same as those of white fishermen. The evidence on the Gulf Coast supports Puckett's findings that blacks have adapted white beliefs to their traditions. On the Gulf Coast, black fishermen are not believers in magic to a greater extent than their white counterparts; because of their common occupation, both have an equal dependency on magic.

These three ethnic and racial groups, Italian-Americans, Yugoslavian-Americans, and blacks, have a strong awareness of group identity. I interviewed members of other groups, but never got as much information about their ethnic culture. For instance, there is a group of fishermen with a French Cajun background living in the southeast part of Texas. They moved from Louisiana, where Cajuns have lived since the eighteenth century. They have many traditions which give them ethnic identity, but their fishing folklore seems to be the same as that of the rest of the commercial fishing community. I interviewed only three Cajuns, so that it is difficult to draw many conclusions about their culture. At the opposite end of the coast, in Brownsville and Port Isabel, many of the workers on the shrimp boats are Mexican-Americans, but again, too few were interviewed for any valid investigation of their culture. There are a few scattered fishermen of Scandinavian origin up and down the coast, but they have lost much of their group identity. The same is true of the few Portuguese-born fishermen who live on the Texas coast; they have been largely assimilated into the surrounding culture. Somehow, of all the European ethnic groups, the Italians have maintained the strongest sense of their heritage.

The Italian-American community of fishermen is located in Galveston,

where they form a sizable minority of the overall population. The older Italians were born in a small fishing village near Catania, Sicily. Most of my informants were fishermen in Sicily before coming to the United States, and they have continued this occupation here. Their migration from Sicily followed a set pattern; most of them came to Florida to fish and stayed there until the big general migration to Texas in the 1930's and early 1940's. One man was a leader in the move to Galveston. He came to Galveston in about 1920 in advance of the heavy wave of migration. He shrimped and established his own fish house, which became very successful. He then began to bring friends and relatives from Florida and Italy into Texas, which explains the fact that so many Italians in Galveston are from the same village in Sicily. His son now runs the fish house and shrimp packing business his father founded, which is presently one of the largest on the Gulf Coast.

The eleven informants of Italian background ranged in age from eighteen to ninety. Eight of them were born in Sicily, and the youngest three were born in the United States. Most of the older men had a limited education, less than high school, but two of the young men were enrolled in college. All of the informants were Catholic, as the entire Italian-American community seems to be. Seven of the informants were married and had children. Several were members of the same family; one man and his two sons and two other men with one son each were all informants. Seven families were represented by the eleven men, and three of these families were related to each other. The men who specified their ages were eighteen, nineteen, thirty-six, fifty-seven, fifty-eight, seventy-five, and ninety. The other four did not give their exact ages, but three seemed to be in their fifties and one in his seventies.

The older men had been fishing all their lives; only the ninety-year-old man was completely retired, and his retirement came at age eighty-eight. One man was wealthy from his huge fish and shrimp packing business. The rest did not approach his wealth, but they all had comfortable homes in middle-class neighborhoods. Their friends seemed to be mainly people with the same ethnic background, but there was no complete separation geographically or socially from the rest of the community. Four of the men owned and ran their own medium-sized shrimp boats. They mainly took one-day trips into the Gulf, although at times they stayed out for as long as a week or two. One man worked at a shrimp house, another worked on his son's boat, two worked part-time for their father, one ran a grocery store, one was retired, and, as mentioned, one owned a shrimp house and a fleet of boats.

A few of the Italian-American fishermen expressed attitudes about ethnic group identity. There was a definite difference in attitude between the Italian-born first generation and the United States–born second generation. The older people still talked about their home and relations in Sicily. They were familiar with traditions of the Old World, but the younger generation has severed its cultural ties with Europe. One day I observed a graphic instance of the difference between the generations. I was in the home of the Damico family when one of the boys asked what they were having for dinner. His mother said they were having an Italian dish, and the boy made a face. I asked him about his preference in foods, and he said he did not like Italian food. Both of his parents eat it regularly. This is just one way in which the second generation has rejected the customs of the first. The same boy was engaged to a non-Italian girl, and his mother remarked that this was the first time this situation had existed in their family. The younger men seem to be rejecting their father's traditional occupation, fishing, since they are studying unrelated fields in college. The older people speak Italian part of the time, but the younger ones do not seem to have a knowledge of it. Thus, the customs and traditions brought from Sicily to the United States by one generation are being discarded by the next, which is becoming more assimilated into the dominant culture.

This social background is helpful in analyzing the occupational folk beliefs of fishermen with an Italian heritage. Most of their magic beliefs are parallel to those of the rest of the fishing community of the Gulf Coast. For instance, seven of the eleven informants mentioned the hatch-cover taboo (# 1). Their belief was that it was not found exclusively in the United States. Two men said they had heard the taboo in Italy, and another said that it was a "universal" belief. Five of them knew of the custom of putting money under a mast for good luck (# 97). Three said that horseshoes were good luck on a boat (# 81). Three said they launched a new boat with a champagne bottle (# 102). They also reported many widespread empirical signs. Four of the fishermen mentioned a ring around the moon as a bad-weather sign (# 132). A red sunrise as a sign of wind (# 158) and a rainbow at night as a sign of good weather (# 179) were common beliefs of Italian fishermen. In both magic and empirical beliefs, Italian-American fishermen are part of the overall occupational tradition of seafaring men.

They do have a few magic beliefs and one weather sign which seem to be primarily their own, since they seldom appear outside the circle of Italian-Americans in Galveston. The weather sign is that when the shrimp turn red a storm is coming, and it was reported four times by Italian fisher-

men and only once by a person outside this group. None of them said it was originally from Italy, so that it must have been a common observation since they have been fishing in the Gulf of Mexico.

One of the magic beliefs was linked to their religion. Two of the men said that they carried blessed palms on their boat once a year on Palm Sunday for good luck (# 89). The belief in blessed palms as magical objects is traditional among Italians.[2] This is a belief which is supported by their Catholicism, so that they do not think of it as a superstition, and they can believe in it with little or no dissonance forming in their minds.

Other ethnic beliefs are concerned with keeping evil spirits off the boat. A red cloth is tied to the boat (# 85, variant), salt is sprinkled around (# 87), or garlic is kept on board (# 88) to ward off evil spirits. Young Italian-Americans tend to reject these particular superstitions. The concept of evil spirits sounds too "superstitious" to a generation educated in modern American public schools. The younger fishermen trust technology and rationality under hazardous situations on a boat because they have grown up in a society which teaches dependence on these values. The older men cling to their traditional beliefs for psychological support because they have not been influenced as much by modern nonfishing, non-Italian society.

The Italian-Americans had one magic control device which was more popular than any of their other beliefs. Seven Italian-Americans had this belief, and only two other people reported it, one of whom was a man who had also fished in the Mediterranean before immigrating to the United States. The belief was that making the sign of the cross in some way would break up a waterspout (# 115). I collected this basic belief with a varied amount of detail in each case. The first time I heard it was from Chris and Vic Damico, eighteen and nineteen, who were working on their father's boat. "If you see a waterspout and you make the sign of a cross with your hand, it will go away. I heard this from my mother who got it from her father in Italy." Their testimony was void of any of the details which I later collected, but it was obviously an old magical practice which had been brought from Europe. I talked to their mother about the belief, and she said that most old Italians are "superstitious" and she admitted a belief in some of the practices herself. An older man who was in his fifties added some details to the belief: "They used silver knives to get rid of, to cut the waterspout. They make the sign of the cross with silver knives. Some kind of words were said with it." The next man, who was fifty-seven, remembered one more detail: "The oldest boy in the family, they hand him a knife and say a prayer." As the informants increased in age, they knew the

belief in more detail and had more faith in its efficacy. The young men simply dismissed it as an old "superstition."

I was still to receive more information about the belief. Finally I talked to a seventy-five-year-old fisherman who spoke only Italian; his son-in-law had to act as translator for us. The old man remembered practicing the belief in their old fishing village in Sicily:

> Old-timers used to do the thing with knives and waterspout. There was a special day when they had to learn the words, some feast day. They had to use special knives. Christmas Eve was when you had to learn the words. Had to use a white-handled knife. It was supposed to cut thé waterspout. Use scripture and holy attitude and make the sign of the cross. They said "tail of the rat" so that you might not harm any human beings. It was a secret thing for seafaring men. It was an elderly lady who said she had cut the spout. (# 116)

His version details a complete magic ritual which was an important part of the fishermen's life in the Sicilian village. Christmas Eve is a traditional time for teaching magic among Italians.[3] The belief is related to their Catholic religion by its use of the cross symbol and the "scripture and holy attitude" used with it. This would have much more strength in Sicily, since virtually all of the community had the same religion. Despite the religious overtones, the belief was basically magical.

From this strong, complicated ritual the belief has degenerated in its migration to the United States and through three generations into an interesting but not vital "superstition." It serves no function for the teenagers because they have no faith in it. It serves only a limited function for the men of their father's generation because they have forgotten many of the details. The old man, who is representative of men their grandfather's age, is the only one who still remembers the belief in detail and who would still practice it if the occasion arose. The belief illustrates the generation gap at its widest, and it shows how ethnic traditions are dying out in a new context.

The dissonance theory of Festinger and the cultural-social concept of Geertz have a direct relevance to the problems arising out of the traditional beliefs of Italian fishermen. Internal dissonance arises in the minds of old and young Italian-American fishermen because of their disagreement over magic beliefs. The dissonance is probably greater for the older men, since their beliefs are being ridiculed by sons and nephews and grandsons who represent the values of the surrounding nonfishing society. The young men also feel some dissonance, since they are denying the traditions of

their fathers which go back for many years. Those in the younger generation who continue in fishing have an easier time accepting old beliefs than those who are not fishing, because their dissonance is lessened by their psychological need and their involvement in a small group which gives social support to their beliefs.

The younger generation is usually more actively involved on the social level of the community than their fathers or grandfathers. This has come about because of their education in public schools where they have freely mixed socially with non-Italian members of the community to the point where they are now marrying outside their ethnic group. This is not to say that the Italian parents are not also socially interactive with the rest of the community, but they are not so to the same degree because of their strong ties to family and ethnic group. The folk beliefs of the Italian-American fishermen can be considered a part of their cultural framework according to Geertz's definition.[4] These same beliefs are a part of the social structure of the older fishermen, who actively use them in their work, but they are not a part of the social structure of the younger ones, who deny them. A discontinuity exists between the cultural framework of values of older Italians, a framework which was established in Italy, and the new social structure of the children in the United States. Geertz says that this discontinuity is to be expected in societies where change is a normal occurrence.[5] Change is certainly taking place in the Italian-American ethnic group, as they have migrated to a new country and come into contact with a new social structure which is in conflict with their old cultural beliefs. A conflict also exists between the cultural values of the two communities. The surrounding society has the values of rationality and dependence on science, which are in conflict with the ethnic group's magic folk beliefs and some of their Catholic beliefs. Thus, the experiences of this group demonstrate that discontinuity can exist on the cultural level alone, on the social level alone, or between the cultural and social levels. But since the social structure tends to change at a faster rate than the cultural framework, the discontinuity will most often exist between these two.

The folk beliefs of the Yugoslavian-American fishermen are similar to those of the Italian-Americans, as are their problems in accepting the beliefs. The Yugoslavians fished in the Adriatic Sea between Yugoslavia and Italy, so that many of their Old World beliefs are the same as the Italians'. Like other ethnic groups they acquired the beliefs of the fishermen of the Gulf Coast after they moved here. They do not have a definite settlement on the Gulf Coast as the Italians do. The four Yugoslavian fishermen I interviewed were from two different ports, Freeport and Aransas

Pass. Freeport probably has the largest Yugoslavian-American population, but there is no evidence that its members constitute a separate community within the town. Thus, their ethnic group identity is not as strong as the Italian-Americans. Their migratory pattern is not as definite either. One of my four informants came to the United States as early as 1921, the next in 1936, the others in 1939 and 1940. The two men from Aransas Pass came directly to that area after landing in America. The other two lived in New York and South Carolina before coming to the Gulf Coast.

The education of all four men was halted by the necessity of starting work on the fishing boats at an early age. Two of the men finished the sixth grade, and the other two had less than a high-school education. All four men are Catholics, as is usual for their ethnic group. All four are married and have families. They have the following number of years' experience in active fishing: fourteen, twenty, thirty, and forty. Their ages are forty-seven, fifty, fifty-five, and sixty-six. Two of the men own fleets of shrimp boats, which have made them prosperous. One owns and still runs his own shrimp boat. The last has retired from active fishing and serves as harbor master for one of the shrimp ports. They are all well integrated into the surrounding society, although they have not severed all ties with the old country. Three of the men have been back to Yugoslavia to visit within the last ten years. They have not brought many native beliefs with them to the United States, but the few they have brought are distinctive.

The main magic belief which was native to Yugoslavia and which three of the men know is similar to the Italian method for breaking up a waterspout except that instead of a cross, the star of David is used for magic control of the elements (# 119). Only one of the men, Tony Racki, expressed a real belief in this practice; the others were skeptical of it. The typical attitude was expressed by John Mihelich: "I got that from the old country. You're supposed to make a star to break it up. You mark it down on something; they say it won't come toward you. I say that's superstition. If you can break it up, you be Jesus." Here religion interferes with the belief instead of reinforcing it as it does in some cases. John's religion tells him that controlling the elements is in the nature of a miracle which only Jesus and saints can perform. The Yugoslavians have taken this control device out of the context of their own religion by substituting the Jewish star for the Christian cross as the magic symbol. This probably came about because such magic practices are condemned by orthodox Catholicism. The Jewish star is an effective substitute because it is a powerful symbol within its own religion and because it is related to Christianity through the Old Testament. The Christian men can use the power of another religion's symbol in magic ritual without causing the conflict which would arise if

they used their own. The ritual as described by the Yugoslavians lacks the detail of the Sicilian version. There is no special day when it is to be learned, no use of silver or white-handled knives, and no "tail of the rat" statement to prevent harm to human beings. These details may be confined to the fishing village of Sicily which the Italian fishermen are from, but if they were a part of the original belief in Yugoslavia, their absence now means that the belief has degenerated, since elements of it have been forgotten. In any case, there are other indications that the belief no longer has a vital function among most fishermen.

Tony Racki, who still believed in the ritual, had a personal experience with waterspouts to support his belief:

> And I tell you one thing, I was one time at Port [name cannot be discerned from recording], you know like in the spring of the year like last month. . . . And one was coming straight toward me, and I turn her on, and I throw that thing [star of David] overboard like that on a piece of paper, any piece of paper. And I slow down, and that thing just lifted completely.

Tony had enough faith in the belief to practice it during a time of crisis, or perhaps the stress of the moment made him try magic because nothing else was available to allay the waterspout. But once he saw the apparent effectiveness of the ritual, he had faith in it from then on. The other three Yugoslavians do not believe in the ritual because of their integration into the dominant society which considers it "superstitious." Here is yet another case of dissonance which is not resolved, causing an eventual decline in magic.[6] The attitude toward this Old World ritual also illustrates the discontinuity between old cultural beliefs and a changing social structure.

The black pogie fishermen of the upper Texas coast have perhaps the most unusual relationship between their traditional occupational beliefs and their social structure. Their beliefs actually function in two basic ways: on the instrumental psychological levels within their occupation which links them to all other fishermen, and on the social level in a way which is different from any functions which serve white fishermen. The social function provides the black fisherman with a counter-image to his racial sensibilities. This meeting ground, the point of tension between their ethnic and occupational loyalties as revealed in their folk belief, is the central problem which arises in an analysis of their folklore.

One of the most important factors in shaping the ethnic sense of community of the black fishermen is that their phase of the fishing business is completely segregated from white fishermen. Blacks entirely man the men-

haden boats from deckhand to captain. The only Texas menhaden fishery is located in Sabine in the southeast corner of the state. Menhaden fish, better known as "pogies" to the fishermen, travel in schools in nearshore salt water. They are processed at a plant in Sabine into fertilizer, fish oil, and additive for poultry and livestock feed. The menhaden has been called "from a monetary consideration . . . the most valuable fish in the Gulf of Mexico."[7] The pogie boats are all metal and range in size from 160 to 200 feet long. Each boat has a crew of twenty to twenty-three men who handle smaller "purse boats" which circle the school of fish with large nets. Although the men are now aided by winches, the job of pulling in the nets is still hard work. The boats usually make only one-day trips out into the Gulf, but they stay from dawn until after dark. With the addition of freezers in the last few years, the boats have gone out for as long as two weeks. The boats go to a maximum of fifty miles from the coast. The menhaden fishery is a modern industrial complex, with planes and radios used to spot the fish.

Most of the men who work on these boats were not born in Texas; they have come from Florida and the East Coast, where they also worked in the pogie fishery. The menhaden fishing industry in Texas did not open up until around 1950; but menhaden fishing has been in existence on the Atlantic Coast since 1880,[8] so that many of the fishermen have been in it since adolescence, and generations of families have been connected with it. Many of the men are still tied to the East in many ways and return to their old homes in the winter off-season. Others stay in Texas the whole year even when they are not actively fishing, and most of these live in Port Arthur, a city of 67,000, twelve miles from Sabine. These men have become a part of the black community in Port Arthur, where they are segregated geographically and socially from the whites. The managers of the menhaden plant are white, but contact with them is small since each captain is completely responsible for his boat and crew. The captain is set up as though he were in business for himself; he hires and fires workers and pays them from the money he gets for selling his fish to the plant. Of course, the plant owns the boats and the planes, but for all practical purposes the captains are independent operators. Nevertheless, these are black men living in a southern white world, and they are aware of race relationships, especially in the fishing business.

A sixty-four-year-old captain, James Mills, and a plant worker, Tommy Ford, in his late twenties or early thirties, indicated in an interview their own feelings about the racial situation. Captain Mills reflects the prevailing attitude of white superiority which he seems to have partially accepted: "I'll tell you something else, now, believe it or not. I can take a crew of

men and you could take one. I hire a crew of colored men and you a hire a crew. They work for you better than they would work for me, they would." He implies that this was because I am white. He also gives tacit support to segregation: "But right now I couldn't operate this boat with a white chief. Understand me? If I was captain of this boat and hired a white chief, why, we wouldn't get along." Captain Mills goes on to indicate his own moral reservations about a white man refusing to take orders from a black: "He shouldn't feel that way. It's just something you can't do anything about."

Tommy Ford has a more aggressive attitude: "Shit, I don't care what color he is or who he is just so you done pay me my money." He speaks about wanting equality: ". . . if you do a job and you get paid, and if I'm colored and I do the same job, pay up the same money." His concept of racial equality is usually couched in economic terms, and as far as social equality is concerned he is willing to accept sexual segregation; he says that he is not interested in marrying white girls. Here a certain amount of racial pride and sexual bravado comes out in both men:

> *Ford:* But you take colored people now, and you say "white," you just one color. But you take colored people.
>
> *Captain Mills:* And they're any color they want.
>
> *Ford:* Any color you want. You can go out there and get a woman that looks just like she's white; you can get a black woman, or you can even get a high yellow, or you can get a red woman. All the women is out there; all you got to do is pick out one.

Captain Mills has a lot to say about blacks and whites in the pogie fishing business, and more racial pride comes out in his attitude. He believes that whites and blacks get along better working separately in fishing. "It's hard to mix colored captains, white captain. They operate some places together, but it's hard, you know, to get them to work together. It's best in one way for them to work it like that, all colored, all white." This is the only explanation he would give me when I first asked him about the all-black situation in menhaden fishing, but later when I asked him another related question his answer expressed racial pride:

> *Mullen:* Is it easier for a colored person to get into the fishing business in the South than in some other business?
>
> . . . . . .
>
> *Captain Mills:* It was a little too tough for the white man if you want to know the truth. Too much work. They just couldn't take it. They tried it. It was tested out with the white man; they couldn't take it.

> That's the reason it's one-sided, all colored people. That's the reason the colored captain got a berth. Otherwise he never would come in here.

He indicated that the blacks operated as a group to exclude the white man from the pogie business:

> Understand me now. A whole lot easier for a colored man to make a captain in a way than it was for a white man. The fishermen were all Negro, just about. If you was to come on this boat as a captain, and we's all colored, why we say, "We ain't going to learn him nothing." You couldn't make it. You'd probably be on here a couple of weeks, and man they'd put you off because you couldn't produce. Therefore the colored man had a better chance.

Earlier, in Atlantic fisheries, the captains were white; as they died, they were replaced by other whites, who could not succeed because the black crews would not support them. Despite this group feeling and working together against the whites, much of the blacks' knowledge about fishing comes from whites, since all the blacks started out as crew members, and most of them had fished on the same boats with whites earlier in their lives.

All of the black fishermen expressed pride in their occupation and strong identities as fishermen. On my field trip in 1971, I specifically asked every pogie fisherman how he viewed his occupation. Their replies were consistent in expressing their sense of satisfaction: "I'm glad I'm a pogie fisherman. We makes a good living at it." "I just like fishing and the pay I get. That's my pleasure, fishing." "This is about some of the quickest money." These three men all mentioned the economic benefits as well as the enjoyment they got from their work. Since they live in a segregated society where wages for black people are lower than for whites, their emphasis on high pay is understandable. Other men emphasized their sense of tradition in fishing: "I like it. I've worked on water all my life. I was born there in Virginia, water at my back door." Another said, "We got some fellows born on the water. Don't do nothing else but fishing. It's in their blood."

The folk beliefs I collected in 1967 were from five fishermen—three captains and two deckhands. Captain Mills has been pogie fishing the longest, fifty-two years, since he was twelve years old. He was born in Jacksonville, Florida, and his father was in fishing also. He was among the first group of pogie fishermen to come to Texas. He has been a captain for sixteen years and seems to be respected by the other fishermen. He is the only one who lives on his boat during the fishing season, and he goes back to his wife in Florida during the winter. I interviewed him on his boat on a day off dur-

ing the fishing season. The other four informants were interviewed in their homes during the off-season. One of them, Albert Thomas, has been a captain for only eight years. He was born in Fernandina Beach, Florida, in 1920, and he started washing dishes on the pogie boats at the age of twelve and working nets at fourteen. He had another brother who was a fisherman at that time. He came to Texas in 1956 after having fished in Florida, North Carolina, Delaware, and Virginia. He lives in Port Arthur all year. The third captain, William Duke, has been fishing since 1939. He was born in Evergreen, Florida, fifty-five years ago, and was brought up in the coast town of Kingsland, Georgia. He was mate on a boat which came to Texas in 1950, making him one of the first pogie fishermen in the state. He fished in Florida and New Jersey before coming to Texas. He now lives in Port Arthur with his wife and family in a middle-class home. Sam Bates, a deckhand, is also from Kingsland, Georgia, and he first came to Texas with Captain Duke. Sam Bates has fished on the pogie boats since 1940 in North Carolina and New Jersey. He is now fifty-five and still working on the boats. He also lives in Port Arthur all year in a middle-class black neighborhood. John Austin, also a deckhand, has the least amount of fishing experience of the five informants, but even he has been fishing over twenty years. He was born in Montgomery, Alabama, and worked on the highways before starting to fish at the age of twenty-four in Apalachicola, Florida. He fished on the East Coast before coming to Texas in 1953. Like Sam Bates, he has never attained the position of captain.

Most of the black fishermen's folk beliefs are the same as the beliefs of white fishermen. Four of the five blacks reported the Friday taboo (# 3), and Newbell Niles Puckett collected it from blacks in the South before 1926. This does not mean that the belief originated among blacks; in fact, Puckett places it in white tradition: "All through England and Scotland, as well as on the continent, Friday was held to be an unlucky day to begin any new work."[9] As with most of the black beliefs, this one has been acquired from whites through contact between the cultures within the United States. According to black informants, the Friday taboo is widely believed, to such an extent that many fishermen will defy the company to keep from going out on Friday. But I noticed that pogie boats made trips on Friday just as though it were any other day.

Four of the black men reported the common black-suitcase taboo (# 35). The Negroes say they have known captains who would not let their crews bring black suitcases on board, but none of them would admit a personal belief in it. The suitcase taboo is related to the belief in black as a magic color which is widespread among blacks and whites. A related taboo was reported by one captain who seemed to believe in it; black cats were

not allowed on board a boat (# 50). There may be some survival of a belief which Puckett collected: "Possibly the black cat is the animal most chosen by the Negro devil for impersonation; some go so far as to say that all black cats represent the devil in disguise. . . ."[10] But the fishermen's belief is probably related to the general fear of black cats among whites and blacks.

One black fisherman had heard the *alligator* word taboo (# 57). Three of the Negroes knew the hatch-cover taboo (# 1), and they say they learned it from the white shrimpers. Two black men spoke of the whistling taboo (# 2) but did not know the wind result (# 106). The whistling-for-the-wind tradition was alive among black seamen at an earlier time in this century, according to Elsie Clews Parsons, who found it among blacks in the Sea Islands of South Carolina.[11] Again, this does not point to a black origin, since Puckett says that whistling for wind at sea is "distinctly European."[12] Two traditional omens reported by black fishermen are birds landing on a boat (# 75) and rats leaving a ship (# 67).

Black fishermen have only one good-luck device; this corresponds to the ratio of good-luck devices to taboos and bad omens found among all fishermen on the coast. Captain Mills' testimony suggests that he believes in the device: "I've known some captains that carried horseshoes [# 81], put them over the door. I knew a fellow who could find fish because of this." This traditional device was also used by white fishermen. Puckett pointed out the importance of horseshoes in black lore, but he said that it is probably of European origin "or possibly in part a native American development."[13]

Black fishermen reported the following widely known weather signs: circle around the moon (# 132), "sun dogs" (# 154), storm clouds (# 167), and rainbows (# 179). Captain Mills was the only informant on the coast to mention "water turkeys" (# 210) as a weather sign, and he supported the belief with detailed personal observation:

> The water turkey hollers. He'll holler more like a man than anything I ever heard. A real keen voice just like some woman. And he can holler, you can hear him. In calm, I'd say you could hear him four or five miles. And that means bad weather. He don't holler often. You know some birds have a habit of just making noise. But it might be a week before you hear him holler, might be two weeks. But anytime you hear him holler, you can look for it to get bad.

This sign reminds one of the albatross or petrel weather beliefs, and it is probably related to these. This sign is in the mainstream of tradition and not simply a part of black lore. An old experienced captain will expand a

basic belief through his own observation whether he is black or white. The porpoise was another weather sign mentioned by black fishermen. They also watch the moon and the wind as signs for favorable or unfavorable fishing.

Several magic beliefs of the blacks present special problems but at the same time shed light on their culture as the previously mentioned beliefs do not. All five of the blacks related the legend about a captain who climbed the mast, carrying a hatchet, blaspheming God, and asking for a fight (for complete details on this legend see Chapter 2). A total of only seven white fishermen told this same legend, although over one hundred white persons were interviewed. There seems to be something inherent in the content of the legend which has caused it to stick in the minds of black informants. The blacks all claimed to have known the central figure in the legend, and they say he was a white man. Two of the blacks mention that this captain was punished for his actions, which may indicate a social function of supporting the commandment against blaspheming God. This may be related to the fundamentalist religious background of many Southern blacks, but the link is not obvious.

A more logical explanation for the popularity of the legend among blacks is suggested by the testimony of a white man. The man, who claimed to be the son of the blaspheming captain, said that he first heard the story from a black deckhand on his father's boat. He added that all the blacks were afraid of his father because of his violent temper and his treatment of blacks. The old captain is said to have locked black deckhands in the hold of the boat for long periods of time. One of the black men said he was afraid to work for this "bad" captain. Even though the name of the captain differs in white and black versions of the legend, there could be an actual person about whom the story was originally told. The fear of the blacks concerning this violent man who seemed contemptuous not only of God and nature but also of black human life made them remember the stories which were told about him. The white men did not have this intense fear but only a feeling of condemnation toward the man which was not enough to keep the legend in the minds of more than a few white fishermen. The inferior position of the blacks in the social structure of the South placed them in a world where fear was a common occurrence. Thus, the society of the South which is a part of black experience has influenced the retention of a folk legend.

One particular magic belief has a strong bearing on the culture of black fishermen. The belief in buying wind (# 107) is known by three black informants, but none of them know the legend which accompanies it. Captain Mills reported the control device in some detail:

> They have an old saying that you could buy wind. The man who believes in that, he would stand probably on the deck or the bow. He'd take a nickel, a dime, or a quarter, whatever amount of wind he wanted to buy. He throwed it back over his shoulder. Well, now, I have seen it work, but it would be blowing before he do that. I don't say he bought that wind; it could've been rising all the time.

The details in this black version indicate that the belief is still practiced, that it still serves a vital function. The last statements show that Captain Mills wants to believe in the device even though rationality denies it. A modern function for this belief was first reported by blacks; of the seven black fishermen I interviewed in 1971, five knew of buying the wind as a way of getting off work. Only one out of twelve white fishermen who knew the belief mentioned the modern function. The black fishermen gave many details and indicated a strong degree of belief:

> *Captain Duke:* Throwing pennies overboard, that make the weather bad. A bunch of fellows, they get tired, want a rest; they throw a handful of pennies overboard.
> *Mullen:* Did they believe it would work?
> *Captain Duke:* Yeah, they believe it. Think I've throwed a few over myself.

Several men specified that pennies were thrown overboard; why throw away nickels, dimes, and quarters when pennies will work as well? One saw a more specific motivation for wanting to go in: "They'll do any kind of thing to go in when they making money; want to get in and spend it." The avowed purpose in buying wind then was to give them time off from work. The older function in sailing boat days was to get wind for the sails when a boat was becalmed. This change of function in the belief reflects a great deal of information about the economic differences between the two races. All the blacks I interviewed had been deckhands at one time; it has only been in later years that a black man could become captain. The inferior position of a salary-earning black working under a white employer is a familiar one for many blacks in the United States. Thus a folk belief which enabled a salaried man to get out of work and still get paid would be of much more instrumental value to blacks than to whites. This is especially true in the fishing business, where most whites own their own boats or are captains of boats.

The function of the belief among blacks says even more about their social structure. By using the belief to get out of work, black deckhands could be consciously manipulating the white stereotype of them as lazy.

The function fits the pattern in black culture noticed by many sociologists, that of black workers developing mechanisms for getting out of work under white bosses. They work against the whites in this case just as they do in excluding whites from the pogie business. The social mechanism and the cultural mechanism of their folk belief function in parallel ways. Here again their social situation has influenced their folk beliefs in a profound way.

Several conclusions can be made as to the relationship between ethnic and occupational lore. The existence of black beliefs in the older collections of Dorson, Puckett, Brown, and Parsons shows that they are part of an old tradition of fishermen of all types on the East Coast and extend back to European origins. Most of the beliefs collected from the five black fishermen apparently come from white fishing tradition. The closest I came to a purely black belief is the turtle taboo (# 9). The black and white fishing communities are joined by a common occupation and by a common fear and interest in the sea. Racial considerations are not strong in the black beliefs except for the purpose used in buying the wind. The black informants indicate their awareness of racial prejudice in the fishing business in their efforts to exclude white men, but these mechanisms are not generally reflected in their folk belief.

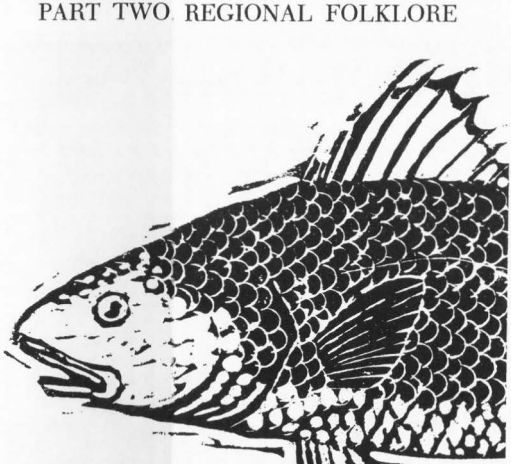
A more thorough understanding of black belief, culture, and social structure comes about when Geertz's theories are applied to the situation. The occupational beliefs of blacks can be considered a part of their cultural framework because these beliefs contain occupational values which have been passed down to them in traditional ways. These beliefs have not become a part of their social structure on land, where blacks interact in behavioral situations with whites; in fact, the beliefs are divergent from their social structure. Since beliefs are part of the cultural framework, the divergency between the two fits a basic pattern abstracted by Geertz, the same pattern which applies to Italian-American fishermen's culture: "In most societies, where change is characteristic rather than an abnormal occurrence, we shall expect to find more or less radical discontinuities between the two [social structure and cultural framework]."[14] The black fisherman's folk beliefs as a part of his culture are in a state of tension with the social structure of the larger community. His folk beliefs give him a self-image as a fisherman, but the social system gives him a self-image as a black man. The attitudes expressed by blacks illustrate how the social system makes them aware of race. They have a vivid awareness of race relations which is expressed in their mechanisms to exclude whites from the menhaden boats. On the social plane these men are segregated from whites; they are constantly reminded that they are black by their exclusion

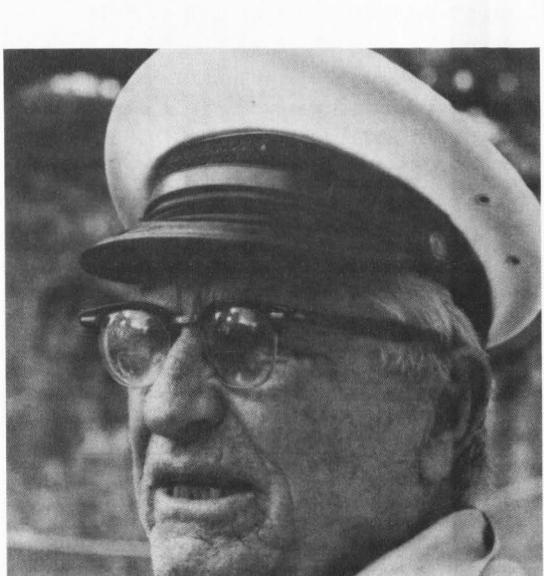
from white society. But within at least a segment of their cultural plane they are not segregated; their folk beliefs picture them simply as fishermen, not as black fishermen. The rest of their cultural pattern is more in harmony with the social structure; other cultural beliefs, symbols, and values tend to emphasize segregation and inferiority just as the social structure does.

The cultural folk beliefs are a part of the black fishermen's occupation, but race does not have much effect there. In other words, the self-image as a fisherman is in conflict with the self-image as a black. The black fisherman's pride in his occupation and his identity as a fisherman has been indicated by his own direct statements; occupational identity is also reflected in the strong tradition of occupational folk beliefs. Occupation exerts a sense of identity almost as strong as race, but occupation ultimately does not overshadow race. In his everyday life the black knows he is in a minority among a dominant white majority. The blacks have racial pride though, and they also have pride in being fishermen, a pride upheld by a strong folklore tradition. The black fisherman is still part of a minority ethnic group, but, as his folk beliefs show, he is also part of a large, sea-oriented community which extends at least to every coastal area in America.

The other ethnic groups within the fishing community, Italian-Americans and Yugoslavian-Americans especially, are also a part of this sea-oriented culture. And in all three cases their occupational culture and the dominant society in which they live have more influence on their lives than their own ethnic groups. The sense of ethnic identity has not died out completely, and it is this identity which often clashes with the rest of society, causing dissonance and discontinuity between society and culture. In every case, three communities, occupational, ethnic, and the larger society, are working on the individual's folk beliefs. The functions of the beliefs are determined by the three interwoven factors, and the functions of folk beliefs in turn can give new insights into the complex environment of human society and culture.

PART TWO REGIONAL FOLKLORE





Ed Bell telling stories. Photo by author.

6. Buried Treasure Legends

Max Edwards, a retired bay fisherman who now makes and mends nets in Palacios, has lived on the coast of Texas all his life. He is steeped in the local history and regional folklore of the coast, and the stories he tells reflect his knowledge of the area. He lived and fished on Galveston Island for many years, and he is very familiar with the territory between Galveston and Palacios. He is a typical bay fisherman in his well-developed sense of regional identity. Like other bay fishermen storytellers, Max Edwards' regional identity is expressed through two kinds of folk narrative—buried treasure legends and humorous anecdotes, especially about local characters. A few bay fishermen also tell tall tales. One of Max Edwards' favorite pastimes is to regale visitors to his net shop with tales of the old days on the Texas coast. A friend and I sat on the piled-up nets in his shop one day and listened attentively while he talked of pirates, buried treasure, and supernatural interference in treasure hunts. He told the following story in a serious tone as historical fact:

> This up here on the Tres Palacios River, there was an old trading post, and they used to come by and trade with that old man, and of course they was prairie schooners, and the stage coach used to go past there, and of course they stop once in a while. An old man, an old woman, and his daughter would run the place. Well, the old man and the old woman died and they buried the money. That's when from there to Houston was a long ways, and they didn't believe in banks in them days no ways, so of course they buried it, and anyhow we went up there with Tucker and my brother-in-law and my wife, they went up there looking for it. And them rods drawed to the spot about either ten or twelve northwest of that fireplace, and of course they went looking for it and went down in the hole and throwed the bricks up, pretty deep, and then lightning struck and scared them away. First it struck on the west side, and they waited about fifteen minutes and

said, "Well, maybe it won't do it no more." Then it struck on the east side. Clear skies, said there wasn't a cloud in the sky. Scared them almost to death. 'Course I don't know, it might be true—they—there's something to that, that scares people away. (Motif N511, N566)

The historical setting and use of local place names give the legend its regional sense, and the search for the treasure by Max Edwards' family gives it a personal involvement.

Edwards told another story in which he was even more personally involved:

There's also a ship, I found it when I was on the beach fishing. And she's about two hundred foot long, and she's laying just south of the Cain place. The Cain place, that's west of the Colorado River. Now this ship has two tanks—she got four tanks altogether, but I don't know about them two back tanks; one might be a boiler, one might be the tunnel to the stern, the propeller. These tanks, I guess, is about twelve feet wide, one on each side up on the bow. The top is flat. We's going down on the beach, and we was looking for schools of redfish, and, of course, about maybe half a mile offshore, and we seen that muddy—looked like a red spot, you know like it might be a bunch of redfish. So I told my brother-in-law, "Head out there, I want to see what that is. That's a bunch of redfish, they're too far offshore, can't get them, but we'll go look at them anyhow." So we went on out, and when we got fifty or sixty feet from it, I said, "Look out, we're going to hit it." And it looked like them tanks was only about a foot and a half under water, and my boat was drawing thirty inches anyhow. We run over it, and we made three or four circles of that ship. And them plates—it was an old ironsides, and Edwin Peterson told me there was seven of them; says they know where six of them is, but the seventh one, they don't know where it's at, it's lost. And he says that's it. I described it to him, you see how it was. And those plates, it looked like they stacked them all the way around them, you know where—the wood, it was a wood ship, and these plates was either nailed or bolted on, and, of course, the worms had eat the wood up, and they fell down. They was standing all around it. This water was clear, and we could see it plain, and Edwin Peterson says there's a lot of gold in the chest; the chest is encased in cement, and he wanted to go down there. I met him in the hospital, and he wanted to go down there and look it over, and he wanted me to show him where it was at. So, of course, most of the time the water is muddy up that way. And he

> asked me if we could see it from an airplane, and I said, "Yes, if the water is clear you can easily see it." (Motif N513.5)

Here instead of supernatural interference, the condition of the water prevents people from finding the treasure.

Other stories give various natural reasons for not finding treasure. Elmer Johnson, a bay fisherman, told of a treasure from the days of the Spanish missionaries:

> I know where there's a man-sized man in gold that I'd like to find. That's down on Matagorda Island. It was off an old Spanish schooner. A priest landed there and put that man-sized man down in a well. The priest came back and looked for the statue, but he couldn't find it, the coast had changed so much. Old Man Benson told me about it. A good many people have searched for that treasure, that statue. (Motif N514)

The shifting coastline prevents this seeker from finding treasure, but in a few stories the treasure is actually found. Jim Baker related the following:

> It's actually a fact. I have a half-dollar still at home. Two Mexicans would go floundering at night, right around the beach near the pass. They came upon a pipe sticking out of the water, and the pipe was full of silver half-dollars, half-dollars scattered in the sand. The boy disappeared with his money in 1927. The old man had $360; I talked to him a month after he found it. 1853, 1845, 1863, and 1865 was the dates on the coins. I kept them and still have the one from 1845. (Motif N534)

Baker was the only person I talked to who claimed to have evidence of buried treasure; more usual were stories about discovered treasure which no one could prove, such as this legend told by Ed Bell:

> There's a lot of buried treasure stories, but there's none of them very concise except the one about the big safe in Powderhorn Bayou. And it's supposed to be somewhere in here with $80,000 worth of diamond rings and gold watches and some gold in it. But it's supposed to be valued somewhere in the neighborhood of $80,000 in those days. Well, diamonds, I don't know whether they were more valuable then than now or not, but as far as souvenirs or something it'd be of unlimited value now if they could find it. But this Ted Parker told me one time that him and Willy was down at the bayou one night, talking around there, and he said they saw a boat out there. And they said they could

> see a light in the porthole, and he said, "You know, that's the Old Man's boat." He always called his daddy the Old Man. Says, "That's the Old Man's boat." And says, "Look there, it's got something on the aft end of it." Said they pulled up beside it, and said there was something up there square and big, all nasty looking, oysters and stuff all over it, said it looked like it had a door swinging open. Said they raised up and looked in the porthole, and there was four men standing around inside there, and said they had all kinds of stuff, watches and rings, and said they was cleaning them up and was just having fits over them. And he said they was a muddy, nasty mess, but said they was in there cleaning them up. And said, "We happened to look and they had more guns around there than we ever saw in any one place." Said, "One of them was the Old Man, and the other one was Bill Bowen." And I forget who the other two were, but there were four men in there. And as near as I can tell along about that time all of them did get pretty well fixed. And there's no extra reason about it so it might be that they did find that old safe. But if they didn't find it, that old safe is still laying around loose down there somewhere with all that material in it. (Motif N513)

The story ends on an ambiguous note, but the rest of it suggests the treasure was found.

All of these treasure stories are set on the Texas Gulf Coast, but I also collected buried treasure legends set on the Atlantic Coast, since some fishermen have migrated from there. Harold Kent told a legend about his home state of Maine:

> In Booth Bay Harbor, there's one in particular. A family lived there, and an old sea rover visited them and left a trunk. The family moved to Vermont, and one of the boys and a friend years later looked in the trunk and found a document. The old man had a cache and was burying his money on every visit. The boys dug it up, gold, silver, and diamonds. (Motif N530)

This story from Maine is similar to buried treasure stories in Texas; treasure legends seem to have common ingredients no matter where they are told in the United States.

Tales of buried treasure are one of the most widespread forms of folklore in America. Gerald T. Hurley studied 250 American treasure stories, and although most were from printed sources, many were originally from oral tradition.[1] Buried treasure stories have been widely collected in Texas. J. Frank Dobie says, "However many legends of other kinds there may be,

the buried treasure or lost mine legend is the typical legend of Texas."[2] In *Legends of Texas*, Dobie includes two sections on buried treasure, and in *Coronado's Children* he deals with treasure tales of the Gulf Coast in a chapter entitled "Laffite [*sic*] and Pirate Booty."[3] Since pirate treasures are usually associated with coastal regions and islands, it is not surprising that the Gulf Coast of Texas has a tradition of buried treasure stories.

I collected eleven different buried treasure legends from seven fishermen on the Gulf Coast. There are probably many more, but since I was collecting from only one occupational group, the number of stories is limited. Other people besides the seven knew of buried treasures, but they did not know any narratives associated with them. Their knowledge of buried treasures is traditional, and although it is not in narrative form, it is still folklore. Perhaps the verbal expression of knowledge about buried treasure could be classified as folk belief, although it does not have the characteristics of superstition. These nonnarrative beliefs about treasure are related to what Hurley calls a "treasure tale fragment," which implies a treasure and demands a search but contains few explicit facts.[4] The following is an example of a buried treasure belief or tale fragment: "I heard that Spanish gold was buried in cannons on False Live Oak. I've seen the marks on the trees, spikes in the trees. Lot of people dig around over there." I collected a narrative about money in cannons, but this particular statement does not have a story about how the gold got there or about any attempts at finding it. When the informant mentions Spanish gold in cannons he implies a possible story about the source of the treasure. He also suggests possible stories about the search for treasure when he mentions that digging has gone on at the site, but since there is no plot in his statement it cannot be labeled a narrative.

Each specific buried treasure will have a cluster of such tale fragments and personal statements surrounding it. When speaking of the same treasure, the son of the informant quoted above said, "When I was a boy, over on West Shore—they used to call it 'Blackjack Shore'—we used to see holes dug all along there. Around a certain tree there was supposed to be treasure. I never heard of anyone finding it." The details about trees and holes being dug are the same, but the son's version does not mention Spanish gold, cannons, or False Live Oak. The two statements are similar in that they are both personal; they both claim to know of evidence of treasure: "I've seen the marks . . ." and "We used to see holes . . ."

Other people offered different evidence of treasure, such as finding gold coins; one man, Ed Bell, spoke of a couple he knew who collected coins found on the beach:

> . . . she'd fish some and put in a lot of time at the fishing, and she'd

find old coins. They had one of the nicest collections of old coins that I ever saw. They had a cigar box half full of them; even had some twenty-dollar gold pieces.

Mullen: Find them around here?

Bell: Found them right here on the beach, right around their place. No telling how much it would be worth, but they let a storm come along and wash it all away. I think that was in '42.

Mullen: So there must have been a lot of buried treasure around here at one time?

Bell: Well, I don't know. It was so odds and ends that I think it was mostly just stuff that was lost in storms by people, different people. But there's been lots and lots of stuff found here. My sister found a twenty-five-cent gold piece. And an old boy told her that it would be worth—I believe he said thirty thousand dollars if it was a U.S. mintage because they didn't make nothing unless it was proof. And it was a California mintage, but it was as pretty as if it was brand new.

Even though Ed Bell is not sure about the existence of buried treasure, the presence of the gold coins makes it a possibility. The fact that his sister's coin was *almost* worth a fortune adds to the possibility of sudden wealth. Like the other informants, he bases his statements on personal observation; he saw the coin collection and the gold coin belonging to his sister. The significance of the fragments is that they assume the existence of the coins, not that they reveal events surrounding how the coins got there or how they were found.

Many fragments about buried treasure contain personally observed evidence, but some merely mention awareness of the tradition: "There's supposed to be a gold statue at Vinson's Slough near Cedar Bayou." "It's supposed to be Spanish treasure down on Padre Island." The phrase *supposed to be* cropped up in many of the statements. This indicates a partial belief in the existence of a treasure, but since the individuals do not know of any evidence they are reluctant to claim it as a fact. Others spoke of hearing stories of buried treasure: "I've heard a lot of tales about his [Lafitte's] treasure" or "There's a tale of two crossed brass cannons down here filled with jewels," but they could not tell the stories. The use of the word *tales* probably indicates that they think of them as fictional, but they could still believe in the possibility of treasure.

Even though there is not a feeling of certainty about buried treasure on the Gulf Coast of Texas, most informants believed that it was possible. The statements of belief and fragments of tales act as reinforcements for belief in the existence of buried treasure. Although they are not easily identifiable

as genres of folklore, the fragments provide a context which is conducive to the telling of buried treasure legends. Most of the narratives I collected about treasure were at least partially believed and can thus be categorized as legends. More people knew about particular buried treasures than knew specific treasure stories, but the verbal expressions about treasure from people who did not know stories are necessary to encourage the telling of full narratives.

Of the seven men who told full narratives, five were bay fishermen and two were sea fishermen. Of the ten others who had some information about buried treasure, nine were bay fishermen and only one was a sea fisherman. There was a total of fourteen bay to only three sea fishermen. When I asked sea fishermen about buried treasure, they would say they did not know anything about it. The three sea fishermen who knew tales did not know Texas coastal legends. They knew stories about areas they were originally from, Louisiana, Georgia, and Maine. This helps explain why bay fishermen knew more buried treasure legends. The buried treasure stories are tied to a specific locale, and local residents are more likely to know tales and fragments about these. Most bay fishermen are from the small towns on the Texas coast and have a sense of local identity. Most of the sea fishermen have migrated to the large shrimp ports in Texas from other coastal states. They do not have a strong local identity because they move around following the shrimp. If they do know buried treasure stories, the tales are about the area which they consider their original home.

Buried treasure legends I collected on the Texas Gulf coast are similar in content and structure to others collected all over the United States. Hurley points out that the stories are told as true: "Brief and factual, they have a simple and comprehensive inner logic governing events as well as credible description and detail marking the narration."[5] These are the characteristics not only of buried treasure stories but of any belief legend. Since they are told as true, they will inevitably follow the rules of logic and verisimilitude. Specific content elements pointed out by Hurley are also found in the Texas tales. They are filled with everyday objects and landmarks such as rocks, trees, and hills. The source of treasure includes the Spanish, Mexicans, and pirates. Money is hidden in cannons, and certain recurring forces prevent the finding of treasure.

The structure of buried treasure stories as delineated by Hurley also fits the Texas tales. He says that plots have a simple two-part structure: (1) the treasure is hidden or accounted for, and (2) the search is made for the treasure.[6] I think a third structural element should be added to this, one which Hurley recognized but did not identify as structural: (3) the outcome of the search is success or failure. If the tales are analyzed from

Hurley's two-part perspective, they tend to support his conclusion: "Few tales give detailed attention to both parts." A story which concentrates on the burying will dispense with the seeking in a few sentences, and "the story of the hunt . . . will reduce the initial part of the tale to a simple sentence of explanation, or begin, *in medias res*."[7] The eleven tales I collected on the Gulf Coast included two that emphasized the burial, seven that emphasized the seeking, and two that emphasized both structural elements equally. From this small sampling it seems that the seeking of treasure has more interest for the story-teller and the audience and more significance for the culture than the burial.

The third structural element, the outcome of the search, is implicitly recognized by Hurley when he identifies two means by which a treasure seeker is thwarted, physical and supernatural. The physical includes faulty maps, rockslides, and storms; the supernatural includes ghosts and other spirits.[8] The means may change within the content of the story, but the structural element of two possible outcomes remains fixed as an underlying pattern. In three of the eleven stories in this study the treasure is found, in six it is not found, and in two it is uncertain whether it is found. The means by which the treasure seekers fail in the six stories are varied; three have physical causes, and three have supernatural causes. The physical reasons are (1) a landmark is moved, (2) a man loses his boat and the water is too muddy, and (3) the landscape has changed. The supernatural reasons are (1) a warning comes from an old man, (2) a dead man's ghost guards the treasure, and (3) thunder and lightning occur on a clear day. The specific content of the third structural element is especially important in understanding the function of the buried treasure legends because it has bearing on the folk idea of "unlimited good" which has been associated with American buried treasure stories.

The concept of "unlimited good" was first formulated and applied to buried treasure tales by Alan Dundes.[9] The idea of "unlimited good" as part of the American worldview was contrasted to George M. Foster's "image of limited good" which was identified in Mexican peasant culture and other peasant cultures around the world:

> By "Image of Limited Good" I mean that broad areas of peasant behavior are patterned in such fashion as to suggest that peasants view their social, economic, and natural universes—their total environment—as one in which all of the desired things in life such as land, wealth, health, friendship and love, manliness and honor, respect and status, power and influence, security and safety, *exist in finite quantity* and *are always in short supply*, as far as the peasant is concerned.[10]

Since peasant society is a closed system with only limited good available, "any kind of success and progress is due to fate, the favor of deities, to luck, but not to hard work, energy, and thrift."[11] Mexican treasure tales are offered as supporting evidence for the image of limited good. Treasure tales in a Mexican peasant community "*are a functional requirement for the maintenance of this world view*. That is, treasure tales (or modern equivalents) must continually be invented and told and retold to explain economic phenomena which can be explained in no other way."[12] If a villager comes into sudden wealth, it cannot be explained in terms of thrift and hard work because there is only so much wealth to go around; to the other villagers it must have been luck in the form of discovering a treasure. Since the treasure comes from outside the village universe, this explanation of wealth helps to maintain the image of limited good.

According to Dundes, the opposite image exists in the American world-view. The principle of unlimited good means that "there is no real limit as to how much of any one commodity can be produced."[13] Evidence for this principle is seen in proverbial expressions such as "There's (plenty) more where that came from," "The sky's the limit," and "Any man can be President." One of Dundes' most elaborately worked out pieces of evidence is the buried treasure legend:

> In this context, it may be significant that most accounts end with the treasure not recovered. This suggests that Americans think that America remains a land of opportunity, that boundless wealth is still readily available to anyone with the energy and initiative to go dig for it. The fact that the legends are open ended—they do not end as some legends do—may indicate that they are standing invitations to Americans to dig and provide their own happy ending to the story.[14]

According to this theory, then, one of the functions of buried treasure legends is to reinforce the folk idea of unlimited good. Hurley's study of 250 American treasure stories lends support to Dundes' analysis; one of the main characteristics of American buried treasure tales is that they "usually end with the treasure *not* being found."[15] The "loot in American treasure tales is mostly where it was to begin with. It is still to be found."[16] This pattern is maintained in the stories I collected; in only three of the eleven is the treasure found for certain.

The concept of unlimited good in buried treasure legends seems to be valid, but I think a closer analysis of the content and structure of the legends suggests some qualifications of this principle. Dundes' identification of the Protestant work ethic with unlimited good in the treasure legends is not supported by evidence within the legends. He suggests that

Americans think "that boundless wealth is still available to anyone with the *energy* and *initiative* to go dig for it."[17] Dundes offers the proverb "Hard work will pay off" as further evidence of this. But buried treasure legends in America are not at all concerned with *energy, initiative,* or *hard work.* Based on his study of 250 buried treasure tales, Hurley says that "most people like the idea of *something for nothing,* and enjoy talking about fellow men who receive, or almost receive, a very great deal in exchange for a *modicum of ingenuity and effort.*"[18] Buried treasure tales on the Texas Gulf Coast support this view. In the three tales where the treasure is found, no work has gone into finding it. In one tale two boys playing with a mineral rod accidentally discover treasure on the beach. In another, two Mexicans accidentally find a pipe full of silver coins while fishing. And in the third, some boys happen upon a treasure map which leads them directly to the treasure. The belief in work and energy as a means to finding treasure may exist outside the tales, but the stories themselves and the contextual comments surrounding the tales suggest that luck and fate are more important than initiative in discovering buried treasure. This does not refute the entire concept of unlimited good of course, only that part of it which relates the Protestant work ethic to buried treasure legends.

Another qualification must be made to the application of the concept of unlimited good to buried treasure legends. It is true that most legends end with the treasure still undiscovered, but Dundes ignores an important question in analyzing the significance of the ending: What causes the failure of the treasure-seeker to find the treasure? This has an important bearing on the principle of unlimited good, since it implies a limitation. Something limits the treasure hunter in the quest. Even though the treasure may still be there, the forces which prevent the finding of the treasure are still there too, and any new hunter will encounter the same difficulties. "Energy and initiative" cannot pay off if forces beyond individual control are protecting the treasure. In order to understand the principle of unlimited good in buried treasure legends, the entire narrative must be analyzed, not just the ending.

As was pointed out earlier, physical forces sometimes interfere with finding treasure. Ed Bell tells one long tale which details the burial, search, and outcome of a treasure hunt, and several physical factors come together to thwart the seekers:

> Years ago when pirates were operating on the Gulf Coast they were cornered by some kind of Coast Patrol, I don't understand just what kind, but they were almost all wiped out in the battle. And there was a few of them left over to be hung, which they naturally did except for

two boys. These boys were probably grown at that time, but they proved that they were, that they had been captured off the Coast wise ship and made to work, because they had scars and stripes all over them to prove they had been beaten and working awful hard, so the government troops let these boys go, and the boys didn't tell them that they knew where the buried treasure was these pirates had buried. They had melted the gold down into gold ingots and buried it. And—little gold bars—so after they got away for a while why then they decided they'd go dig up this gold. They found it and dug it up without any trouble. And one of them moved his over to the east side of Matagorda Bay to a little island called Mad Island. Some people call it Mud Island; some call it Mad Island. Anyway he buried his gold there. Another boy loaded his on a sloop and moved it over to Indianola. And he had the sloop anchored out in front of Indianola when the hurricane hit and the sloop was lost somewhere inland. They claim that it must have gone inland and somewhere in there it was lost. It could have sunk in the mud somewhere, but it was gone anyway. They never could find that gold any more. But the fellow checked on his that had the Mad Island place, and his gold was still there, so he made a map of it and left it buried. And years later his son had worked a while on this place with him and then moved away, and when the old man died he had constructed a table of edgeways pieces of board about four inches thick, and they often wondered why this table was constructed like that. It was kind of a desk table. And he left a will and told them to never destroy that table or give it away or sell it in any way, to keep it always. And if they decided they didn't want it for anything to take it apart. So they decided one night while there was a bunch of them there to take this table apart and see what it was like. So they began to take it apart, and in the top of the table part they found a hollow space and in that was a treasure map where this money was buried, this gold, so they decided to go back over there and check on it. And this one fellow says, "Wait a minute." Says, "I happen to remember says in this map it says you go to a certain tree which was a soft cedar tree, and there is a gold spike in there about the size of a harrow spike to use for farm work." And he says, "I found that spike and put in the harrow in the place of one that was lost," and said, "I was always cussing that because it was just an old yellow spike and it wore out so fast that it wasn't much good." And he says, "How we could find it, I don't know." And he said, "We decided to go back over and check this Mad Island. And when we got over there the storms and everything had eroded the island away until there was nothing left but just mud bars." And

> they figured the gold must have sunk into that mud because they couldn't find any sign, but they have always wanted to go back and check on it to see what they could do about it. But they have never found any way to get to that gold yet. So I don't know whether the gold is there or not, but it could be. (Motif N511.1, N511.19, N511.1.12, N513.5)

This story has all the concrete detail and local place names characteristic of the belief legend. Ed Bell believes the story; he heard it from the nephew of the son of the man who buried the treasure. The immediate circumstance in which the nephew told it was at the Del Mar Tackle Show in Corpus Christi. The subject of buried treasure came up naturally in a conversation when Ed Bell mentioned the fact that his sister had found an old gold coin on the beach. The nephew claimed to have been present when the map was found and the search was made. Ed Bell slips into first-person narration when the nephew enters the story, which gives a sense of immediacy and adds to the verisimilitude of the legend.

The first physical cause in the story which prevents a successful outcome is a traditional element. The nephew removes the landmark and thus interferes with finding the treasure. Hurley mentions the moving of a landmark as common in American treasure tales.[19] The specific landmark of a metal spike or rod is traditional in the area of Matagorda Bay. Dobie relates the tale of one of Lafitte's treasures buried near the mouth of the Lavaca River and marked with a brass rod. Years later a ranch hand, not realizing what it marked, removed the rod and could not find the location again.[20] This is very close to the details of Ed Bell's story of the gold spike as a landmark, and the two stories may be related.

Ed's story has two elements which thwart the treasure hunters: the removal of the gold spike and the erosion of the island, which left nothing but mudbars into which the treasure must have sunk. The physical factors discourage treasure seekers: "they have never found any way to get to that gold yet." This seems to suggest a limit on "unlimited good"; both man and nature have worked against the finding of the treasure. The story ends on an ambiguous note of uncertainty mixed with possibility: "So I don't know whether the gold is there or not, but it could be." This last statement reveals the ambivalence of treasure tales toward the concept of unlimited good. No one is certain about the presence of the gold; they *are* certain about the difficulties in finding it, but there is a possibility that it is still there.

Tales which stress supernatural interference in finding treasure add to this sense of ambivalence. Max Edwards' story of lightning striking on a clear day given at the beginning of this chapter functions as a warning

against seeking the treasure. Another story told by Edwards functions in the same way, with a direct warning given by one of the characters in the legend:

> This old man come from Denmark, and he got off the ship at the wharf, and he walked down the bay shore, to a place called Eagle Grove, and he come around the bayou where I was living at. He asked me. He says, "There ain't no big oak trees down there." I told him, "That's not Lafitte's Grove, that's Eagle Grove." And he said, "Is there a place on the island called Lafitte's Grove?" I said, "Yes, its about twelve miles down." He says, "Well, can I find it down there?" "Well," I said, "I'm going down in a couple of days crabbing and you go with me and I'll take you to it." He said, "Why don't you take your horse and wagon, and we'll go down there and look for it." And he had these rods and stuff to sound for it, and so anyhow I didn't go with him. So I just thought it was a myth and nothing to it, I didn't believe in it. So anyhow he went on down there and when he came back the next day—I took him down there and he come back the next day. And he had in his pocket some sand and where he had drilled into an oak box and this drill where he had cut into the brass. See, this was a brass-bound box. And he showed me that stuff and said, "That stuff is there." He said, "Between three and a half and four feet deep," and he said, "let's go get it." "Aw," I says, "I don't believe it." So he wanted to give me the map. He said, "Well I've got to go back to Denmark because I'm going to die soon, and I don't want to die in this country." He says, "I want to be buried in Denmark." So he says, "My ship is leaving tomorrow, and," he says, "I want to be on that ship." So he left, and he says, "Go dig it up." So I said, "If I ever think about going to dig it up, I'll send you some of it." He left me his address. "Aw," he says, "don't worry about me, I'm too old to enjoy it, I'd never enjoy it no more." And this map was drawed on a sheep skin, and it was Spanish, and he had it translated into English. And of course me, like a fool, I wouldn't go down there and look for it. Finally I was walking down the road, and I don't know where I was coming from. I was walking on in there coming from my brother's house, and I seen old Henry Osterman, and I said, "Hey, Henry, there's some treasure buried on this place. What you say me and you dig it up?" He said, "It don't belong to you, it don't belong to me, belongs to them sea pirates. You don't need it, I don't need it either." He says, "And you ain't going to get it either, you just leave it there." Of course, after he died, Willie was living on the place, and I went down there and looked for it, me and my brother

> and nephews, we looked for it, but we never found nothing. A fellow named Tucker, he come along, and he had them rods, and he told me, you know, they would draw for money and for gold and stuff. Well, we tried them, and we stood on the road, and they drawed strong right to that spot, and we went around to the east side, and they drawed strong to the west. We went to the south side, and they drawed again to that tree, and of course we couldn't go look for it then, but when me and my brother looked for it, we didn't have no rods and stuff with us, and Tucker, I don't know what ever become of him or where he is at since I lost track of him. (Motif N511, N511.1.8, N511.1.9, N550.1)

There are some confusing elements in this story. He does not explain why he failed to look for the treasure at first except to say that he was a fool. He also leaves out his reasons for not digging for it at the location indicated by the rods: ". . . and of course we couldn't go look for it then." What is very clear in the story, though, is the warning given by old Henry Osterman. His warning is a very emphatic statement, and it seems to suggest a supernatural reason for staying away from the treasure. The sentence "And you ain't going to get it either" could be taken as a statement of fact or as a prophecy. If it is a prophecy, then it comes true; despite repeated attempts no one ever finds the treasure. The certainty with which Old Henry says everything makes him seem like a prophet; he speaks with a moral authority that dominates the narrative. There is a sense of rightful ownership in what he says; the treasure belongs to the dead pirates, and no one else has the right to it. Another moral is found in the story. Even though Henry and Max Edwards are not rich, Henry makes the point that they have no need for wealth. There seems to be an implicit moral here about the corrupting power of riches. Because the treasure rightfully belongs to the pirates and it is not really needed by them, Henry gives his final strong warning: "You just leave it there." The point of this story and the one about the treasure at Tres Palacios is that people are not meant to have sudden undeserved wealth. The treasures, rather than being symbols of unlimited good, seem to be symbols of evil and thus should be avoided.

Treasure legends can be associated with evil in ways other than through the supernatural; treasure can be a direct cause of evil acts. Two stories told by bay fisherman Tom Woods illustrate this:

> This all happened when I was a boy. I wasn't raised here, raised on this peninsula over here. I can tell of an actual treasure found over on MacMullen Lake. Two boys worked on a farm, and their mother kept something bright wrapped up in a cloth. It was a mineral rod, and these boys got to playing with this thing. They'd throw a silver dollar

> down the beach, and whichever way it pointed, there it was. They went and got a shovel, and they dug up an old cannon that was filled with Mexican money. Joe Turner helped them load the silver in a wagon, and Joe Turner lit out for Goliad, and he never has come back yet. It's been proved that he went to Mexico. (Motif N511, N511.1.8, N534)

> A bunch of old crooks lived up here. Nobody ever heard much about this mineral rod for a long time. So there was one old boy, and he disappeared. This boy's name was Patterson, and he was a rough character. And he'd gotten in with this mother of the boys who had the mineral rod. And he was found in a boat with his head beat in. I heard there was two men killed over that mineral rod, and then it passed out of existence. (Motif K1685, N591)

The first story shows that even if a treasure is discovered, human treachery makes it hard to hold on to. The money was easily gained with the mineral rod, but it was also easily lost. The mineral rod itself is the subject of the second story. Since it is a means to acquire wealth easily, it is highly desired, and murders are committed in order to get the rod. The two legends suggest that evil surrounds buried treasures, not the supernatural evil of Max Edwards' tales but an evil of men's acts against one another to acquire wealth.

Evil also is associated with the source of the buried treasure. In coastal legends, the treasure is often buried by pirates who stole it. These are "ill-gotten goods" and seem to be tainted or cursed in some way. A common motif in treasure legends is that a man is killed by the person burying treasure in order to supply a guardian ghost (Baughman Motif E291.1).[21] Doc Moots told a legend which includes this motif:

> Well, the only thing that I've heard, going back to Blackbeard's days. When he'd go off to bury his treasure he'd pick out one or two of his crew, most of the time one. And they'd go bury the treasure, dig the hole and bury it. When he got through burying he'd say, "Now, one of us has got to stay here and watch it." And that one would say, "Well, I'll stay." And kill him and throw him in there with it and bury him with it. Whether that's true or false I don't know. Now that Blackbeard, that's where that island over in Georgia got its name, they said that he had buried treasure on there. There was some people thoug it because they went around digging a lot of holes trying to find it. (Motif N511, Baughman E291, E291.1)

If the initial burial of a treasure is clouded with acts of murder, and the

discovery of treasure leads to murder and treachery, then evil must taint the entire concept of buried treasure.

Rather than being "standing invitations to Americans to dig and provide their own happy endings," many buried treasure legends are warnings against seeking treasure. The folk idea of "unlimited good" is undoubtedly expressed in some treasure legends, but in most it is modified by a belief in the evil inherent in the treasure. The concept of evil is reinforced by the murders at the burial, by the supernatural warnings, and by the treachery and murder involved in seeking treasure. Perhaps another folk idea is being expressed in the buried treasure legends: "You don't get something for nothing." This proverbial expression is related to treasure legends at least as directly as "There's (plenty) more where that came from," and more so than "Hard work will pay off." The endings of buried treasure stories do reinforce the principle of unlimited good, but, as Dundes points out, in America the unlimited good can be tapped only through hard work and initiative. In the buried treasure legends, when wealth is acquired, it is through luck and fate. The American dream of sudden wealth is there, but with a caveat, a constant reminder that easy wealth is evil and that the only riches morally worth having are those which you work hard for. This American value is as true for the Gulf Coast of Texas as for any region in the United States. Even though the buried treasure legends are tied to the history of the Texas coast, they are also linked thematically to all American buried treasure tales.

7. Local Character Anecdotes

Tom Bates, a bay fisherman from Bayport (fictitious name), enjoys telling stories about eccentric characters in his area of the Gulf Coast. He sits in a small store in Bayport and swaps stories with local residents and sport fishermen. The character stories fit in at many different points because a personality trait or an event in another story reminds him of some unusual action by a local eccentric. In talking about porpoises he remembers the time that "harum-scarum kid" James Rollins jumped on the back of a porpoise and rode it until it was beached. But Tom's favorite local characters are Mac and Harvey Taylor, two old hermit brothers who lived around Bayport from the 1890's until the 1930's.

Tom enjoys describing the first time he saw Mac and Harvey:

> Well, the first time that I knew Mac and Harvey Taylor I looked up and saw an old Model T jump-up thing made out of a Model T roadster, coming down the beach, and I could see big old feet about two feet long sticking out all over that thing, and there was the awfulest whooping and yelling and dogs barking I ever heard of in my life. And the thing must have been making fifteen or twenty miles an hour, which is way too fast for them old Model T jump-ups to go on the beach. And I asked somebody who they were, and they said that was Mac and Harvey Taylor. And that must have been back about '30 or '31. And I gradually got acquainted with them. . . .

Most of the stories Tom tells about Mac and Harvey are based on his own experiences with them, but other people told stories about them which he has added to his repertoire.

Tom told me how they came to live off by themselves:

> They were born at Taylor's Point as far as I know. And Mr. and Mrs. Ben Taylor were their parents, and the rest of the boys was just or-

> dinary boys. They talked a little rough or something, but they was just as clean and neat and nice as any ordinary person. . . . And all of them, all the Taylors were well thought of, every one of them except for Mac and Harvey, and they run them off from home and wouldn't let them stay there. . . . Had to live off by themselves; noboly'd have anything to do with them very much.

Later, in a letter, Tom gave me more details about their split with their parents: "At an early age Mac proved to be to all intents incurably unruly and sloppy. Ben, Sr., could in no way condone Mac's actions, so he was put out, on his own. Harvey firmly believed Mac could not make it, so joined him." They lived in a little shack off in the salt marsh away from everybody else, but they came into contact with people in the community often enough for stories about them to arise. The Taylor brothers' shack was extremely filthy by any standards because they kept their dogs inside with them, and dog excrement was all over the floor. Local people knew about their unsanitary living conditions, but outsiders did not; the locals would bring outsiders to their shack as a joke, and several stories circulate about these encounters. Tom Bates tells these stories with the obvious enjoyment of an insider laughing at a stranger's discomfort:

> My brother-in-law, well really my wife's brother-in-law, is always barbering, and he's always kind of full of pranks. He got two of his friends to go down there one time to see these folks, Mac and Harvey. He said, "I want you to meet these friends; they're good friends of mine." Well, he did know Mac and Harvey Taylor pretty well. So he went up and knocked on the door. "Come on in if you know the way to unlatch a door." And he told these other boys, "Scuff all the shell off your shoes; now, don't track nothing inside." And as soon as they got inside, says, "Here was these old boys there. Mac was down on his hands and knees, and he'd pushed this dog manure back way back out of the way, and he had an old mop, and he was mopping the floor under it. And he'd wring it out in a tub of water, had been water setting there, and he had it pretty thick." And one of the boys, Mac, says, "What do y'all want, anyhow?" One of them says, "I wanted a drink of water." So Mac reaches over and picks up a cup seting on the floor and says, "All I got is the dog licked in that. You wouldn't want to drink after a dog." And he reached over in this tub and sloshed it around in that muddy stuff. And he reached over in the rain barrel and got some water and stuck it out toward this old boy and told him,

says, "DRINK!" And that old boy drank a gulp or two and went outside and vomited it all up.

The stories about the Taylor brothers are typical of other local character anecdotes on the Gulf Coast. They are about real people who lived in the region, but, like buried treasure legends, they also have functional similarities to narratives found in other locales all over the country. I collected character stories about several different people in various locations. There are stories on the upper coast about a Cajun shrimper who is a bully and fighter. There are stories in Galveston about an eccentric old Italian fisherman. In one area people talk of the fisherwoman who dresses and acts like a man. Several captains are the subjects of stories because of their extremely superstitious nature. However, none of these characters are as widely known in the communities where they live as the Taylor brothers are in theirs. This chapter will concentrate on the Taylors, their stories, and their community.

Local character anecdotes are one of a number of neglected folklore genres. They do not have the identifiable form and traditional background of the märchen and other fictional narratives, nor do they have the widespread tradition and link to folk belief of many legends. In fact, folklorists have not been able to satisfactorily classify local character anecdotes. They are like local legends in that they are based on actual incidents and believed to be true. Herbert Halpert points out the similarities in subject matter between local legend and anecdote; both often deal with fools, witty retorts, tricksters, jokes about other communities, clergy, teachers, and politicians.[1] Linda Dégh notes a "close affinity" between legend and anecdote in their use of realistic background.[2] Sandra Stahl sees relationships with several other genres: ". . . a local character anecdote might easily lie so close as to be indistinguishable from one of its neighboring categories, such as tall tale, historical narratives, the true anecdote, personal narratives, family stories, humorous verbal portraits, or jokes."[3]

Linda Dégh defines the more general term *anecdote* so that a local character story would fit into it: "The *Anecdote* characterizes a person, a memorable event, or a place through a representative personal episode. As a brief and funny experience story it resembles a Schwank not fully developed; indeed, it can be viewed as a Schwank-episode."[4] Later in the same article she discusses the development of "current narratives," "informal and spontaneous stories growing out of everyday experiences" which seem to be replacing traditional genres.[5] "These true stories grow out of reminiscences of the past, and events, hearsay, rumor, gossip, and

personal experiences of the present."[6] This description fits the kinds of local character anecdotes which are currently being collected. Richard Dorson defines the comic anecdote as a type of personal legend about eccentric local characters.[7] The local character anecdote, then, is usually classified as a belief genre, although it has elements of fictional genres.

There are several collections which contain local character anecdotes,[8] and a few studies of the genre have been attempted. Levette J. Davidson describes a group of stories about eccentric characters in Colorado mining camps.[9] Richard Dorson delineates general characteristics of the comic anecdote by concentrating on the traits of the local character.[10] Sandra Stahl's study uses a genre approach to arrive at a usable definition of the local character anecdote.[11] There remains, however, a need for an analysis of a specific cycle of local character anecdotes within a particular community. The fourteen narratives I collected about the Taylor brothers provide a basis for a more thorough study of the nature and the functions of the local character anecdote.

Richard Dorson states one of the traits of the local character which is a key to analyzing his function: "First and foremost the character is eccentric and his legend is built upon his deviations from normal and accepted conduct."[12] Since the local character is considered a deviant, the study of deviant behavior is a valuable approach for understanding local character stories. There is an entire area of sociology which concentrates on the deviant individual and deviant group, but this approach has not produced much information about the societal reaction to deviance. Local character anecdotes are part of the oral tradition of a community and reveal more about society's reaction to deviance than about the deviant. The labeling theory or interactionist approach to the study of deviance is the sociological school which has concentrated more on the social context of deviance, and it has more direct relevance to the study of local character anecdotes. Labeling theory focuses on the processes of societal interaction[13] and therefore has direct application to the creation of stories about deviance, the transmission of the stories, and their functions within the group. Although it has not been recognized by sociologists, the telling of stories about deviant persons is part of the labeling process. One of the most important points in labeling theory is that the social group creates deviance "by making the rules, whose infraction constitutes deviance," and then labeling the rule-breakers as outsiders.[14] This has implications for the study of local character anecdotes. The local character has to have rules to break in order to become the subject of narratives. It is in the breaking of norms that the character is considered an appropriate subject for anecdotes. In order to understand how the anecdotes function in the community, we must know

what rules the character has broken and what norms and values lie behind these rules. We must understand the function of the deviant within the community before we can understand the narratives about the deviant.

The character anecdote is based on actual incidents of deviant behavior which are observed and then put into narrative form by the observer or someone who hears the incident from the observer. Thus, the stories arise and are circulated during the lifetime of their subject, but they continue to be told long after the eccentric character dies or leaves the community. The verbalization of the incident is a part of the process of labeling a person as deviant. After the person is no longer around, the stories continue to be told, and they continue to function to label the behavior described in them as deviant. Their continuous uses within the community are related to the basic attitudes of the group toward the deviant. The first step in analyzing the anecdotes, then, is to describe the community, the deviant, and the deviant's place within the community.

The area where the local characters in this study are best known lies along the Gulf Coast between two bays and includes several small communities. I found people who had heard of the Taylor brothers in towns fifty to sixty miles away, but most of them had originally come from Bayport. This location between two bays and the Gulf is isolated from the surrounding areas, which are more commercialized and industrialized. It is separated from the Gulf by an island, but a pass makes it accessible to the Gulf shrimp boats. There are a few small towns, but most of the land is sparsely settled salt marsh with several cattle ranches. The main highway along the coast runs northwest of this area, passing through a nearby town, skirting around one of the bays, then heading southwest. The rest of the towns are reached by spur highways which dead-end at the water's edge.

The people who live here all seem to know each other; when I would mention to people a name of someone I had interviewed in a town on the other side of the area, invariably they would know the person. Most have occupations which are related to the sea. Even though they are spread over a wide geographic area, the people who live here are an identifiable community who share some of the same folklore, including the cycle of local character anecdotes. Of the fifteen people I asked about the Taylor brothers, only one had not heard about them. Of the fourteen who had known of them, four knew stories about them, and all the rest knew some of their eccentric traits. The person who told the most character anecdotes and who knew most about the subjects of the stories was Tom Bates of Bayport, and it was with this small settlement that the local characters were most closely identified.

There are only a few full-time residents in Bayport. There are several

bait and grocery stores which serve the people who come down to the beach to fish and swim. Tom Bates knows and is known by virtually everyone in the surrounding area. He gave me the pertinent facts about the history and background of the community.

Many of the current residents first came to the area in the 193?'s. During the Great Depression, the beach was thought of as a last resort for the unemployed. Tom Bates says, "In those days, if you didn't make your own living, why you just starved to death right there, and we got by somehow; I don't know how we did it . . . I married a [girl from a larger town], and I promised her I wouldn't take her down to the beach, but there wasn't nothing else to do, and we was getting hungry, we nearly starved to death." People could live off seafood they caught at the beach, but it was a rough and isolated life. "In those days we didn't have any drinking water down here at all, and the only kind of bath you could take was salt water and all the good that'd do is to put another layer of salt on you. . . . All of us were dirty, I guess." Many people lived in tents, and one man fed his family sausage made from armadillos which he shot and prepared himself. The way Tom summed up the living conditions was, "Hard times down here." The phrases Tom Bates uses, "down to the beach," and "down here," indicate his sense of a separate community. According to Tom, the other people in Bayport and the surrounding area also have a concept of their own identity. They think of themselves as "beach people" who are different from outsiders, people from large towns or cities.

Mullen: Did people down there have a sense of, uh, being from the beach as opposed to being a town person?

Bates: Very, very much so. The beach people were terribly not different. Some of them would even call them outsiders. People that would come down from anywhere else down there were listed among lots of people down there as outsiders. Just like they had a different world. And I call beach people, people that were set on living near the beach and thought that everything in the world started from the beach and went inland. Like old Mac and Harvey. I can give you an instance where they said that. One old guy come down there, and he saw them living back in that brush, back over there. Said, "How in the world do y'all stand living way back in there?" Well, old Mac, which was kind of the imbecile, he says, "Feller, didn't you say you was from Austin?" He said, "Sure, I'm from Austin. What about it?" He says, "You live a whole lot further back in there than we do." (*Laughs*) Now that gives you a pretty good idea of the difference of people living on the beach and people living inland.

It is significant that Tom illustrated his point about beach people with an anecdote about Mac and Harvey Taylor, since they seem to represent beach identity. These factors of community identity are important in interpreting the functions of local character anecdotes.

Mac and Harvey Taylor were known personally by everyone in the immediate community and known by reputation in a much wider area. I asked Tom, "Are these stories about them known among a lot of people?" "Oh, yes, they been—there's thousands of people know worlds of them and there's thousands of tales of that could be told." "Were they pretty well known around this area?" "I guess Mac and Harvey was known by more people than any person that's ever been on the Texas coast."

The community's attitude toward them was mixed. Several of the stories show concern for their welfare on the part of the people in the area. Tom would take food to them, and one lady made sure they got proper medical attention when they were injured, but several times Tom mentions that people would not have anything to do with them. One woman informant used Mac Taylor as a "bogyman" control device over her daughter: "I used to worry my little daughter. Told her I was going to get Mac Taylor to be her daddy." The brothers were rejected in terms of social contact by everyone except Tom Bates. He felt sorry for them and tried to help them as much as possible by giving them work when their provisions were low. Tom admired Harvey for his self-sacrifice in giving up a normal life to care for his retarded brother. Since Tom had more personal contact with them, he naturally has more stories about them than anyone else. The rest of the community was tolerant of them but avoided personal contact, as the following statement by Tom Bates shows:

> Hardly think anyone ever loved these boys. Maybe their mother did. In a way, they were gentle. Never heard of them perpetrating a crime. Game violations and disturbing peace they merely turned them loose. The jail refused them. They were only tolerated as an unavoidable nuisance, and were kept back in the bushes as far as possible, them, their dogs and goats.

The tolerance shown for them is part of a pattern recognized by sociologists studying deviant behavior. Small and rural communities tend to handle deviants in informal ways before formal action such as commitment is taken.[15] The Taylor brothers were thought to be retarded or disturbed, but no action was taken by the community against them. Tom said of them, "Well, both of them were a throwback. I guess it'd be about the caveman days. And their mentality was rather low. From a good family, but their mentality was way below the average of a ordinary person." After the two

men had lived in the area for many years, something was finally done about them:

> They were here until about the time of the Second World War, and they picked Mac up and took him to the asylum. Said he was crazy. And Harvey had the flu and died. And they kept Mac out there for a long time, and they finally got a doctor that gave him a good test, and the doctor said he wasn't no crazier than he always had been. Said he was always kind of light in the brain, but said he wasn't crazy, that he could go home. But they wasn't nobody that would have him or have nothing to do with him. His folks flat turned him down. They wouldn't allow him on the place, too dirty.

Mac eventually died, but the anecdotes about him and his brother continue to be told thirty-five years later. The traits that they were known for have traditionally been associated with local characters and have been themes of anecdotes. Of Dorson's ten main traits of local characters, five are found in the Taylor brothers: ugliness, ignorance and rusticity, degeneracy, laziness, and general eccentricity.[16]

The facts about the Taylor brothers' lives and their place in the community as revealed in the stories indicate that they fit the definition of deviance as articulated by one of the labeling theorists in that they departed from the group's normative expectations and were personally discredited, and the community reacted by isolating and attempting to correct them and finally trying to treat them.[17] By considering them deviants in the sociological sense, we can better understand how the stories about their deviant behavior function.

The ambivalent attitude of the community toward the Taylor brothers is reflected in the complex and seemingly contradictory functions which the stories about them serve. The anecdotes provide a variety of responses to deviance. This is in keeping with one of the sociological functions of deviant behavior: "The comparisons which deviance makes possible help establish the range in which the group operates, the extent of its jurisdiction over behavior, the variety of styles it contains, and these are among the essential dimensions which give a group identity and distinctiveness."[18] The people of Bayport compare their own behavior to that of the Taylor brothers, thus establishing the range of behavior which is allowable in the community. This in turn functions to give the local group identity because the variety of acceptable styles will be distinctive from those of other communities. The beach community wants a wide range of behavioral possibilities because of their group identity as nonconformists and their sense of separateness from the rest of society. The anecdotes about the Taylor

brothers provide a symbolic verbalization of the range of nonconformity which exists in the community. Some of the stories project the Taylor brothers as positive symbols, others condemn them for breaking norms, and some stories contain both positive and negative elements.

The breaking of norms may seem on the surface to be entirely dysfunctional for society, but sociologists have pointed out how the end result can be functional: ". . . a norm becomes most evident in its occasional violation, and in this sense a group maintains 'equilibrium' by a controlled balance of the relations which provide comparison and those which assure conformity."[19] When the Taylor brothers break a norm, they are making that norm evident to the community, and the stories about this violation serve as ongoing reminders of the norm. Many of the anecdotes illustrate this point, but the first one Tom Bates told to me is a good example:

Mullen: Are there any people around here that are sort of characters?

Bates: There's not anyone living today that can even be classed with Mac and Harvey Taylor. They're known for many many miles in almost every direction, and in fact I happened to know that they're known clear to Ann Arbor, Maine [*sic*], because there's a little incident that happened down here that could have happened almost any time because they were very far out of the ordinary. In fact, one time I was coming by the place, I'd gotten a party from Ann Arbor, Maine, that wanted to sell me a little camper that was on a jeep, the first one I believe that I had ever seen. It was a homemade camper, and they decided they'd sell it to me for $200, and I told them they'd have to bring it down and deliver it to Bayport. So when we got to the turnoff to come into Bayport, Mac and Harvey Taylor lived about 200 yards straight ahead, and I stopped and told them that I'd have to leave Mac and Harvey a "cartoon" of matches. "Now, don't try to call it a carton because it's a 'cartoon' because that's what they're going to call it is a 'cartoon' of matches. How about you people going by and meeting those boys? Because you'll never have the chance again; there's nobody else in the world like them, and there couldn't be anyone like them." And they said, well, they believed they would do that. So I went over there and I knocked on the door, and old Harvey hollered out, said, "Why don't you come on in? You know how to come in, don't you, Bates?" He knows my knock. So I opened the door, and the dogs come yelping out there, and the whole inside of the cabin was covered with dog manure about three inches deep, and it'd already dried, and they'd just push it back. Seven little old dogs in there. One of them named Beans and

another Biscuit. I forget all their names. And they had a cot in there that was reserved for company, and these dogs used this cot for a toilet. Of course, it was a pretty bad mess in there, and the stench was awful terrible. And all these old clothes hanging over the ceiling joist, which the house wasn't sealed, was old, wore-out stuff and they was so dirty and filthy that they was just as slick as greased glass. And the terrible stench in there because they had the place closed; it was pretty cold weather. And the dogs tried to rare up on this lady's leg and about to tear her hose up, and I hollered at them to get out of the way, and old Mac, he lammed a stick of stove wood toward them, and knocked down three or four of them. And they run over and jump up on this cot and look around like their feelings kind of hurt a little bit. And I look over at this lady, and she's about to faint. I grab her real quick, and I tell Harvey, "Sorry, Harvey, but we got to go. We're sure in a big hurry." And I just did get her outside in time. Got her out there, and she says, "Thank God, thank God. I never saw anything like that in all my life." So I brought her on down to the place, her and her husband, and I got them to come on down. And I told them, "Just about dinner time now, come on in and let's eat." The lady says, "No, no, no, I couldn't, I couldn't eat anything, I just couldn't do it. I . . . no, no." And her husband says, "Aw, come on in and eat. You know that'd be a bridge of hospitality, and you know this southern hospitality, they feel bad if you won't partake of it." I says, "Yes, I'd feel very bad about it." And I says, "You won't find anything in our place like that. Like I told you that there wasn't anybody else in the world like those old boys." So finally got the lady inside, and she looked in there and we had a housekeeper then, and she had everything spotless, there wasn't a speck of dirt anywhere, and everything was nice and clean. And she says, "Oh, thank goodness, thank goodness. I was scared to death." So she seemed to enjoy her dinner pretty well after that. But I imagine they had some tales to tell at Ann Arbor, Maine, when they got back.

The norm of personal cleanliness has been broken by the Taylor brothers because of the unsanitary conditions in which they live. The storyteller makes sure that their behavior is seen as deviant by saying "there's nobody in the world like them." He also makes it clear that he is not a deviant himself in this area: "You won't find anything in our place like that." The stigma that is placed on the Taylor brothers is balanced by the value of

cleanliness which Tom associates with his family and dwelling: "she had everything spotless, there wasn't a speck of dirt anywhere, and everything was nice and clean." Thus, the story makes a direct statement of the value of cleanliness through a condemnation of the breaking of the norm.

There is another underlying value expressed in this story and in other narratives about the Taylor brothers, the value of freedom. The attitude toward them is not entirely negative; their freedom is viewed positively. Tom indicates his positive attitude toward them in the way he wants to show them off to the visitors, ". . . you'll never have the chance again." This is partially said as a joke on the outsiders, but it also reveals Tom's true feelings about them. There *is* nobody else like them because they are free to live outside the ordinary restrictions of society's norms; "they were very far out of the ordinary." They were unique members of the community in many ways. For one thing, they did not have to work.

> *Mullen:* What did they do for a living?
> *Bates:* They didn't do anything for a living. They just eat what they found.

They had no responsibilities to family or society. The image that Tom gives of them the first time he saw them driving down the beach in their Model T "jump-up" with feet flying and dogs barking symbolizes total freedom and irresponsibility. They could live their boyhood throughout their adult lives; they were perennial Huck Finns to the other people in the community. The value of freedom is especially important to beach people because they have severed themselves from town life in order to live a more unrestricted existence on the beach.

The Taylor brothers take on some of the characteristics of heroes in the anecdotes because they symbolize the value of freedom for the community. Tom Bates tells of their eating habits:

> There was one night that they told me what they ate, and Mac said that they ate eighteen wild ducks for supper. But I really believe that Harvey was right because Harvey was more honest than Mac, and Harvey said that there was actually twenty-one of them. And they said they ate all night, and they laid down and went to sleep. They woke up the next morning, says, "Mr. Bates, I reckon it was the next morning; I don't know whether it was that or the next morning. I don't know; we might've slept right on through. It was morning when we woke up." Says, "We were sure hungry when we woke up." Says, "We might've skipped a day; I don't know."

Bill Locke also tells a story about how much they could eat:

> One of them was working on a boat with a fellow and they was going out fishing the next day. The man bought the groceries, about ten loaves of bread, for several days' trip. He came back the next morning ready to go and said, "Well, Mac, we've got everything; we're ready to go." And Mac says, "You better go buy some more bread." "Why? I just bought ten loaves yesterday." "I ate those for supper and breakfast."

Here the local characters have the freedom to eat and sleep when they want to; they are not restricted by schedules or time-clocks, and they can eat as much as they want. Tales of prodigious eating feats are traditional (Type 1561, Motif X931), and often it is a hero figure who is involved. Even deviant characters can take on some of the traits of a hero if the value of freedom creates a wide enough range of acceptable behavior within the community.

No matter how important the value of freedom is, society feels it must place restrictions on it. As labeling theorist Edwin M. Schur points out, "the meaning of the value of freedom in specific situations depends upon its relations to other values."[20] The anecdotes about the Taylor brothers contain the value of freedom and restrictions on freedom based on other values. Mac and Harvey are stigmatized for their unsanitary living conditions but admired for their freedom to live this way if they so desire. The stories enable the community to laugh at and dissociate themselves from the Taylors and at the same time to identify with their freedom.

Another of the sociological functions of deviance which can be applied to the local character anecdote is that of maintaining boundaries for the group.[21] This is related to the function of giving the group identity, but it is a more specific function. The Taylor brothers when they were alive were used in this way by the community. The residents of the beach would bring outsiders in contact with the Taylor brothers on purpose so that the outsiders would understand how the beach was different from town. The beach was a nonconforming place which allowed the Taylors to exist separate and free. Stories were then told about contact with outsiders, and the stories continued this boundary-establishing function long after the brothers were dead. The previous stories about the people from Ann Arbor and the man who drank the water illustrate this point. Tom Bates set up one situation as a trick on the visitors from up North, knowing they would be offended by the Taylors. As expected, the lady reacted to the squalid conditions of their shack by almost fainting. The tone of the narrative suggests that she is being made fun of as much as the Taylor brothers. She is the

outsider, and they are part of the community. Ultimately, Tom dissociates himself from the Taylors' squalor, but the boundaries at the outer margins of the community have already been established and are re-established every time he tells the story.

The story also makes fun of the social graces accepted by town people. The beach is not a place where these can be maintained; the environment is made up of sand and salt water. Many of the residents are fishermen who work outside. Because the community is small and life centers on the outdoors, social contacts are treated informally. The Taylor brothers are the extreme symbol of this informality and lack of concern for "manners." This can be seen in the fact that the cot which was reserved by the Taylors for company was also used as a toilet by their dogs. The lady from Ann Arbor assumes everybody at the beach lives like this, and she is made fun of for her mistake.

The outsider is consistently ridiculed in the character anecdote by being deliberately brought into contact with the Taylors as the basis for a practical joke. In the story about the drinking water, the newcomers are about to enter the Taylors' filthy shack when the jokester tells them, "Scuff all the shell off your shoes; now, don't track nothing inside." The point is that normal social considerations are not relevant in the beach community, and the stories function to express this, thereby establishing boundaries between residents and visitors. The local character anecdotes which are based on hoaxes function in a way which is similar to the traditional tall tale; newcomers or greenhorns unfamiliar with the mores of the local community are made fun of through a joke (traditionally the tall tale) and this is the means by which they learn about the community.[22]

The community's ambivalence toward the deviant in the character anecdote can be seen in all the examples and analysis to this point. The deviant is both a symbol of the group's values and a threat to those values, so that the attitude toward the deviant is mixed. This ambivalence can be explained more fully by the concept of the "in-group deviant" as formulated by Erving Goffman:

> In many close-knit groups and communities there are instances of a member who deviates, whether in deed or in the attributes he possesses, or both, and in consequence comes to play a special role, becoming a symbol of the group and a performer of certain clownish functions, even while he is denied the respect accorded full-fledged members.[23]

Some examples of the in-group deviant are the "village idiot, the small town drunk, and the platoon clown."[24] The Taylor brothers are probably

closest to the village idiot, since the group considers them retarded or "throwbacks." In their positive roles, they are mascots and symbolize good attributes of the group. They do things naturally and innocently that are judged favorably by the community, as the following two stories show. The first was told by Tom Bates and the second by Jim Baker.

> There's one time that I know of they had something kind of funny happen. There's a bunch of Bohemian folks come down, and they wanted to get some cheap oysters from me, and I told them my oysters were two dollars a sack. Well, they said they heard there was some cheaper oysters; they wanted to get cheap ones. And I told them, well, those two old boys over there—and I pointed at Mac and Harvey's—that they usually sold oysters for any price they could get for them. They might get them cheaper from them. So they went over there, and they said, "Well, no, we don't have very many now." Said, "How many sacks did you want?" "Well, we'd like to have about six or seven sacks." Mac says, "Won't take me very long to get them for you." Says, "I'll get them right away." Says, "I've got about a tub full of awful pretty oysters." And he did have; they were pretty So he got in his boat and poled off up the bayou. He wasn't gone about an hour, he come back and he had those seven sacks plumb full. The prettiest oysters on top you ever saw, and he'd filled them with old culls and shells and everything else down in the bottom of these sacks. These boys paid him a dollar a sack for them, and they jumped in their car and took off. And about two days later they came back. They wanted to know where them guys were that sold them these cheap oysters. I told them, "Well, they live up the beach there." They said, "Well, we got a crow to pick with them. Those oysters wasn't no good. They was all hulls." I says, "Well, you go and see them about it." And they came back in about an hour and bought about four sacks of oysters from me, and they said, "One of those old boys told us, 'Well, you said you wanted cheap oysters. Don't you think you got cheap oysters?' "

> While I was there, the Taylor brothers lived at Bayport. They was working out of [a nearby port]. The Game Department was trying to get people to close certain oyster areas. They was going around publicizing it with barbecues and fish fries. Mac and Harvey wouldn't miss free food. This Dr. Rosen from [a nearby town] was making a speech about fish as a health food, and he began to talk about fish

> being brain food. Ol' Mac sitting in back rared back and laughed, "Ha, ha. Feed him some more fish." Dr. Rosen finished his speech real fast, and everybody burst out laughing.

In the first story, the Taylor brothers are justified in cheating the "Bohemians" because they had wanted oysters cheaper than it was possible to sell them. Thus, even though the Taylors may be the village idiots, they can best outsiders in a deal. In the second story, Mac embarrasses the doctor by turning his own words against him. In this situation, Mac is verbally superior to the educated speechmaker. Also, the doctor is a spokesman for the Game Department, an outside authority which tries to impose limits on the freedom of beach people. Thus, it is appropriate that Mac gets the best of him. In some ways the Taylors take on the attributes of the trickster hero in that they use their wits to overcome their adversaries.[25]

The clown role is more common than the trickster role in the cycle of stories. People in the community laughed at the Taylors when they were alive, and they continue to laugh at the stories. In most of the stories where they function as clowns the humor is based on their lack of intelligence and their physical appearance. Tom Bates told the following story:

> Old Mac was walking down in front of Jim Teague's house one day, and he had a big old heavy overcoat on and a muffler, and he was walking barefooted, and oh, it was cold, it was bitterly cold. He got right past the house a little piece, and he kind of staggered on one foot, and he reached down and raised that foot up and he felt of his heel, put it back down on the ground, and he give to it again, limped on it pretty bad. Jim says, "What's the matter, Mac, got a puncture?" Mac says, "You know, I feel like there's something in there, but I can't find nothing." Miz Teague went out there, and she's something of a nurse. And she says, "Let me look at it, Mac, and see what it is." And she says, "Good Lord, Jim, he's got a roofing nail drove plumb up to the head." Says, "I can't pull it out." He had to go get the pliers to pull that roofing nail out, and it didn't even bleed. One of those regular tarpaper nails, big flat-headed nails.

The clown role here is based on Mac's stupidity and also on the physical peculiarity of the size, shape, and toughness of his feet. Tom said, "Well, this old Mac Taylor always reminded me something about like a big chimpanzee when he'd walk because he'd walk with his feet about three feet in front of him." The size of Mac's feet and the fact that they wore no shoes was the most widely known trait of the Taylor brothers. Eight of the four-

teen people who knew of them mentioned this fact. Since the Taylor brothers were physically different from everyone else, this made it easier to place them in the clown role.

Tom Bates told a story in which the clown and mascot roles occurred together:

> And anyway, why, these old boys were—they'd never wear shoes, they just went barefooted, wherever they went, they went barefooted. And one day Mac hurt his foot, cut it open on an oyster, and he decided he'd get him a pair of shoes and start wearing shoes, so he went into Tompkin's Department Store in [a nearby town] to get a pair of shoes. Well, they tried him, and the biggest they had was elevens and they wouldn't even start to fit on him, no way. So Mac says, "I'll tell you," says, "it takes fourteens." So they—"Well, we don't have them, Mr. Taylor. We can order them on special order." "Well," he says, "you order me a pair. When will they be in?" Says, "We'll have them in two weeks from today." So he went back up there in two weeks to get his shoes, and this clerk had looked him over pretty good and decided fourteens wouldn't fit him. So he ordered fifteens. Now Mac never learned a thing in school; he couldn't read nor write, and when he signed his name, he just made an *X*. And that's all that he recognized was an *X*; I know that he couldn't read anything else whatsoever. And he went in there, and he took one look at those shoes, and he said, "Well, I ordered fourteens; those are not fourteens." And turned and walked out, wouldn't have them. So they put them on display in the window, and that was the biggest darned shoes I've ever seen in my life, number fifteens. And that's what it would probably take for him to wear. Now his feet wasn't real big ordinary, but they hung down about two inches, the sole of his feet hung down about two inches. And when he stepped on them, it spread out like a camel's foot, just roll out until they's six inches wide and then they filled out for length too. They was the awfulest things you ever saw on a human being.

His big feet make him a clown, but the fact that he has an innate knowledge which shows him to be in some ways smarter than the store clerk makes him a mascot who is symbolic of the beach community. He exhibits this same superiority over his seeming superior in his confrontation with the doctor about fish as brain food. Mac was supposedly a psychic; during World War I he told Tom of an underground city used by the Germans for making munitions. He said the Allies rolled drums of acid down into the tunnels and finally sealed it off by welding a tank into the entrance.

After the war this story was corroborated by Tom's brother who had been there at the time. It is a common folk belief that retarded people have extraordinary psychic powers, and this takes on special meaning when the village idiot is also the community mascot. He comes to represent to an extreme degree the lack of formal education and innate folk wisdom of beach people.

In all these stories the Taylor brothers are seen as in-group deviants, and the stories function in similar ways to the deviant behavior itself. Goffman says that the in-group deviant "is often the focus of attention that welds others into a participating circle around him."[26] People from the community observed the deviant behavior of the Taylors and became unified as a group in their reaction to it. Attention is continually focused on the Taylor's behavior by the retelling of the stories. Each time a story is told, the audience is welded into a listening and reacting circle around the storyteller. The telling of the story maintains the original function of the behavior.

The range of attitudes felt toward the Taylor brothers enables them to fulfill many traditional roles in the anecdotes. They can be heroes who stand for the freedom and nonconformity of the beach community. They can be tricksters who act in antisocial ways, which the community cannot do. They can be clowns whose stupidity and odd appearance makes the people who laugh at them feel superior. Thus, these local character anecdotes serve some of the same functions as traditional fictional narratives—märchen, jokes, numbskull stories, trickster tales, and so forth—even though they are based on personal experiences of actual incidents involving real people. The need for deviants in a community has been pointed out by sociologists. There is also a need for narratives about deviants which can come from tradition as fictional stories or from personal experiences or second-hand accounts about deviants who actually existed in the community. The anecdotes about real deviants become the property of the entire group, and as such they can function more effectively than traditional tales as symbolic expressions of that particular community's values and norms.

8. Tall Tales

The best storyteller I encountered on the Gulf Coast was Ed Bell of Indianola. He is a true raconteur who has continued the art of traditional storytelling. He tells many kinds of narratives, but the tall tales are his most artistic expressions.

Ed Bell's bait store in Indianola has provided an ideal setting for his storytelling. There are areas in and near the store where people can gather on days when the weather is too bad to fish or after a day of fishing. Ed described the usual storytelling setting:

> Well, I'd get in the shade of a building or out on the pier, wherever happened to be a comfortable place to be, why, sometimes sitting around a table like we are now, or I can tell it there too. Never very often tell a tale like that when we was out fishing. We always had too many interruptions, always catching too many fish.

His audience would be made up of "customers or friends or acquaintances or something or the other. A lot of them would be new people." The new people would be sport fishermen, outsiders from the nearby cities who are at the beach temporarily to fish. Thousands of people pass through the store every year, so that he has a continual new audience for his tall tales. Ed estimated that he told a particular tall tale to thirty or forty people over a four-year period.

The first time I talked to Ed at the bait camp, we were sitting at a table to one side of the main business area, and customers were going in and out. Some of them stopped to listen for a while, and others went on their way. The ones who were listening provided a good audience as Ed told a tall tale:

> The old boy told me one pretty good one, though, about the fish that

> he caught over in Florida. I don't really like to tell it because it's running our fishing place down over here in Texas. He was, uh, fishing off of one of those big boats out in the Gulf. Said he tied into one, and he said that was a monster, said he just heeled that big old craft over. Said they told him the boat was seventy-nine foot long, and he just heeled it over. Said, "I had a harness on that was tied to the boat," says, "still was about to tear me to pieces." But finally, why the other boys took turn about fighting the fish awhile. Said, "After about three or four hours, the fish give up, and we got him in where they could gaff him." Luckily this boat had a hoisting rig on it, so they got a gaff into him and hoisted him up on the boat. Then they had to quit fishing and come in because they wasn't no room for anybody to fish after they laid that fish on the deck. So they went on into port, and when they got there, why he says, "Well, I've got to have this fish weighed. People'll never believe if I don't have it weighed on some public scales." So they put him on a great big old truck, trailer truck—he stuck off—about several feet of his tail stuck off behind. But they hauled him all over town, and they couldn't even find any scales. The public scales wouldn't even start to weigh him; they couldn't find any. And he was cussing and raising Cain; he said, "Man, I've just got to get evidence that this fish is that big." A commercial photographer spoke and said, "Say, fellow," says, "I'll take a picture of that fish, and I'll guarantee that it'll prove how big he is." He says, "That's easily done. You ought to be a professional photographer." This fellow says, "Well, what'll you charge?" And he says, "Just fifty dollars for making the picture." He says, "My gosh, man, take it." So he took the picture, and he said the picture weighed ten pounds.

The people standing around all laughed, and some stayed to hear some more. The typical audience reaction to Ed's tales is amusement and laughter plus sometimes a sarcastic attitude toward the exaggeration of the tales. Ed described one such reaction:

> Well, there'd be two or three that'd be listening to me when I started, and before I got through, why, there'd be fifteen or twenty to fifty around there. And they'd be shaking their heads, and finally they'd leave holding their britches legs real high and walking stiff-legged.

The last described gesture is the equivalent of the folk expression, "He's full of shit." This goes along with Ed Bell's reputation for miles in either direction. As I drove down the coast, I asked people about good storytell-

ers, and as far as fifty miles away people mentioned Ed Bell as a big yarn-spinner. He is proud of this reputation and remarks about himself, "They say that Ed Bell is one of the biggest liars on the Texas coast."

The tall tale differs from all of the other narrative genres considered in my study of fishermen's folklore in that it is a fictional form which is not believed to be true by the storyteller or the audience. As was explained in the preceding chapters, magic belief legends, buried treasure legends, and local character anecdotes have some belief factor within the storytelling context. The belief factor restricts the use of figurative devices in these legend forms. Since the tall tale is a fictional form, the storyteller can employ a wider range of stylistic devices to make the tale more effective and entertaining. Thus, the oral style of tall tale narrating will be the major focus of the analysis in this chapter.

Many scholars have studied the art of oral storytelling. European folklorists have done valuable in-depth studies of narrative performers within their society; Linda Dégh recently reviewed their contributions.[1] In Africa and the Americas, folklorists have also studied style in storyteling.[2] Gustav Henningsen has concentrated specifically on the art of lying.[3] The American oral tall tale has been the focus of several investigations.[4]

Tales of lying have European antecedents, but in America the tall tale has flourished and developed into one of the best-known forms of folk narrative.[5] The western frontier and the state of Texas seem to have been especially fruitful ground for the flowering of the tall tale. As a native Texan who grew up at a time when the state still had characteristics of the frontier, Ed Bell can be viewed as a product of this rich tradition. An analysis of his tall tales should be viewed within the circumstances of his life as a fisherman and the society of the Gulf Coast which have preserved this lively tradition in the face of changes which might have destoyed it.

Ed Bell was born in 1905 on a ranch in central Texas near the head of the Frio River. His family moved away from there when he was six and "gravitated all over the country," finally settling in the "sand hills of east Caldwell County" in central Texas when he was fourteen. He went part way though the eleventh grade before dropping out because a part-time job kept him from studying for school. He first came to the Gulf Coast of Texas at the age of twenty-five in 1930, right at the beginning of the Great Depression. There were no jobs in the towns, so that he was forced to live off what fish, shrimp, and oysters he could catch in the bay. He started making his living selling bait to fishermen. His bait business kept him alive during the lean years, and he was still running a bait camp when I first met him in 1967.

Ed Bell's occupation as proprietor of a bait camp is directly linked to his

role as a storyteller. He uses his ability to tell stories to attract customers to his camp, and he is fully conscious of this function.

> *Mullen:* In the bait camp you'd be very sure of yourself, wouldn't you?
> *Bell:* That's right. At least for years and years I have because I knew that I had to be *the* Ed Bell at the fishing camp to keep it under control. It had to be that, and not only that—when I was *the* Ed Bell it kept people coming. If I'd just been an old slouchy nobody and wouldn't come to the front anytime, they wouldn't have cared about coming down. But if I would thrust myself out before them, and not for wise things, but for entertaining ideas, then they would flock back and bring their friends. Because they'd say, "Listen, come down and listen to old Ed Bell tell those tall tales." Well, you know, if I could get them to do that, I know that I would be doing better.

His identity as a storyteller is unified with his occupation; the stories are an important part of his success in business. He has given much thought to the way stories function to attract people. He mentioned to me that he can verbally convince people to fish, and I asked him how the stories figure into this.

> Well (*laughs*), Pat, that's kind of a vague idea, and I've never got it completely straightened out. Because a story is a method of communication, very much so. And if you can get a kindred spirit out of a story, you've got a customer for a long time, and one that doesn't mind spending money. If the people like you, like what you do, like what you say, they're going to come back. They're going to do it.

His awareness of the importance of storytelling to his business does not mean that his use of stories is cold and calculated; he very much enjoys people, enjoys talking, and enjoys entertaining others with his tales. His natural talents and his personality happen to fit perfectly with his occupation.

I recorded Ed Bell's stories on three different occasions, in 1967, in 1971, and in 1976. The first time he talked about the history of the area, told many personal experiences, and related some buried treasure legends and five tall tales. The second time he talked about his storytelling and told anecdotes and six tall tales. The third time we discussed the aesthetics of storytelling and how he used stories to attract customers. The first two recording sessions provided circumstances which were close to the natural context of the usual storytelling events.[6]

Ed Bell's image as a storyteller is traditional. He learned the tales and the style within an oral tradition from older men as he was growing up and

as a young adult. The first influence on his storytelling was a cowboy named Alec Moore whom Ed knew when he was a teenager in central Texas. Two of his longest, most complex tall tales, "The Bee Tree" and "The Wonderful Hunt," were learned at the age of sixteen from Alec Moore. Moore was a typical tradition-bearer for the community in that he told tall tales and jokes and sang ballads and songs. Ed had a great deal of respect for Alec Moore.

> He was really comical, and he was a man who would be enormously popular if he lived today. His name was Alec Moore, which would be all right for, uh, a television star's name anyhow. Alec could sing cowboy ballads and such as that, and with more feeling than anybody I'd ever heard up until that time. We'd go out 'possum or ringtail hunting at night, get tired of hunting and build up a campfire, and Alec would sing for us.

Besides being a singer and raconteur, Alec was also a witty conversationalist. In describing him, Ed reveals the admiration he felt for the man's wit and verbal ability:

> And you'd never say a word to him but what he'd twist it around and bring you down laughing about it. The first time that I ever heard him pull anything on a woman, he'd met a girl at a dance, and he knew her all right. Said, "My," says, "you sure look good tonight. You sure are pretty for some reason." She says, "Well, I'm sorry I can't return the compliment." He says, "You could lie like I did."

This illustrates the importance that verbal wit and storytelling had for Ed even during his teenage years.

After he moved to the Texas coast, he learned more tall tales from a man called Tex Wilson and his wife, who taught him "The Fish That Pulled the Boat," and "The Giant Flounder" in about 1935. Tex must have been one of the most colorful characters on the Texas coast. He got his nickname from being a Texas Ranger. The story Tex told Ed about why he left the Rangers employs a traditional boast of the Texas Rangers:

> The Captain ordered him to go over and take over a border, and he refused. So the Captain fired him right there. He hadn't been on the force very long. The Captain said anytime that it took two—two Rangers, Texas Rangers—to tame a town, why, he'd quit the force. He said one was all they needed. Tex says, "Well, I ain't going by myself." And he says, "Well, you're fired." And ol' Tex come down to the beach then, him and his wife.

Tex made a living by selling bootleg whiskey, and there were many stories about his brushes with the law, especially how he used hoaxes to get away. Tex Wilson and Alec Moore were both larger-than-life characters who seemed to be a part of the tall tales they told. It was from them that Ed Bell learned the traditional tales, the style of oral performance, and even the image of the tall-tale raconteur.

Ed Bell is very much aware that he is part of a tradition, which goes along with his strong sense of the past: "Well, I've talked to many an old person, and I love to hear old people talk. And I'd listen better than I could say anything when an old person's talking . . . because, listen, when you're getting something out of these dark gone past, it is really good listening." He had to be a good listener before he could be a good storyteller. He continually de-emphasizes his individual role as a storyteller and emphasizes the importance of tradition: "I can't use that much imagination. Almost all of my tales is some that someone else had told. I just retell them. I can't even get up to that kind of imagination." When I asked him if one tale, "The Wonderful Hunt," had changed any down through the years, he replied, "It's, as near as I can tell, it's been exactly that." Staying close to the traditional version of a story requires a good memory, and Ed seems to have an excellent one. "Well, I can remember almost anything that I get a photostatic copy of it on my mind. I had to memorize a little old poem when I was a kid, and I don't know, I could probably recite most of that till today." Thus, he does not consciously change a story very much, but within the tradition he employs many techniques to make the story effective.

Ed recognizes that the effectiveness of a tall tale is not based on exaggeration alone and that there are many other devices at work. This is in keeping with Mody Boatright's analysis of tall tales on the frontier: ". . . the folk liar does not depend upon mere exaggeration. Exaggeration, he knows, is in itself not funny."[7] Ed Bell makes fun of those storytellers who can only exaggerate. He was arguing with friends about who had seen the largest flounder bed:

> I said, "No, it's impossible for you to have seen a bigger one on account of what this one was made of." "A flounder bed made of! What was it made of?" I said, "Made of rubber." "A flounder bed made of rubber? How come?" I said, "So I can stretch it to any size I want to."

He told many anecdotes about people exaggerating the size of fish. A newspaper reporter caught an eleven-and-one-half-pound fish. "And by the time he got that story to Victoria, it'd jumped up to twelve and one-half pounds; done growed a pound just on the trip of him driving up there."

Another man caught an eight-and-one-half-pound redfish and was celebrating by drinking beer. "After the third bottle of beer the redfish weighed twenty pounds. By dark it weighed twenty-five pounds. And he must have drank some more beer on the way to town because by the time he got to town and got it in the newspaper, it was forty-five pounds." These two stories are not tall tales; they are anecdotes which contain an implicit mockery of those who exaggerate. No art is involved in exaggeration, but the effective tall tale uses many artistic devices.

There are four major areas of style which define the tall tales in Ed's repertoire. Three of them, the use of concrete detail, ludicrous images, and point of view, have been identified in previous studies,[8] but the other stylistic trait, narrative persona, has not received as much attention. All four devices are important in understanding the style of the tall tale.

Concrete detail occurs in description and dialogue, and functions to give the story an air of reality. Many examples of concrete details can be seen in Ed's story "The Fish That Pulled the Boat" (1967 version):

> Well, Tex Wilson, he'd always taken the cake for tall tales. He had one flounder he caught and a jewfish. I don't know which one to tell first, but I might as well tell the jewfish, I reckon. They went out in the bay in Madam's boat. Madam's boat was about eighteen foot long, had three-foot sides on it, straight up and down. I don't suppose you could put enough motors on it to make it make ten miles an hour. He had a thirty-two-horse Johnson on there, about the biggest motor made in those days. They parked out at the old wreck, about nine feet of water, and set out a bunch of jewfish lines. That old Tex told a boy, said, "If we get a strike on this, uh, on the bow first, why jerk up everything, anchor and all, let's let him pull the boat till he gives out." Sure enough, said, "We got a strike right way on the bow," and said he jerked up the anchor and all the other lines and throwed them in there. And said, "We had to squat down to get behind the gunnels because they was blowing their hair out by the roots going so fast." And says, "I told one of those boys, 'Can't you throw the anchor over?' " They had a seventy-five-pound anchor, and said, "Toss this seventy-five-pound anchor over." It just skipped along on the water behind the boat. The man says, "Start up that motor and turn it, get it in reverse, can't you do that?" He says, "Yeah, it might do it." So he got the old motor started up and put it in reverse and got it wide open and slowed the boat down then where they could stand up and look around. There wasn't no land nowhere in sight, and they looked

> at their watch, and they'd been nine minutes since they'd hooked the fish. And so he said, "Chop that line loose quick, we must be in the Gulf of Mexico." So they cut the line loose, and it took them two hours and forty-five minutes to get back to Port O'Connor. (Type 1960B; Motif X1303.1, X1303.1 [df])

The concrete dialogue functions to advance the story in a realistic way: "Chop that line loose quick, we must be in the Gulf of Mexico." The descriptive details are very specific and concrete—horsepower and brand name of the motor, exact weight of the anchor, depth of the water, and specific place names. All this tends to ground the story in the real world so that the ludicrous images seem even more incongruous and comic.

Ludicrous imagery is the major stylistic device of the tall tale; it is the main source of humor, and in many ways it distinguishes the tall tales from all the other humorous folk narrative forms, such as local character anecdotes. Ludicrous imagery is the expression of an abstract quality such as speed or size with an absurd concrete word picture which emphasizes and exaggerates the abstraction.[9] For instance, in the previous story, instead of just saying the fish pulled the boat fast, Ed says it pulled the boat so fast that the seventy-five-pound anchor "just skipped along on the water behind the boat."

There are two ways the ludicrous image is used in Ed Bell's tall tales: as an explicit description and as an implicit part of the action of the story. An example of the explicit use of the image is a phrase in the 1971 version of "The Fish That Pulled the Boat": "it got to going so fast about to pull these people's hair out of their heads." More usual is for the image to be part of the action, as in the last few lines of the tale, where he says it took them two hours and forty-five minutes to go a distance the fish had pulled them in nine minutes. In each case the device gives imaginative force and comic intensity to the descriptive adjective; it is more than mere exaggeration because the image has to be absurd and incongruous in order to be effective. The effect of the ludicrous image is to create a comic mental picture for the listener. This is part of the aesthetic of the raconteur: ". . . good stories and storytelling are dependent upon vivid phrases and images which allow the listener and the teller to picture in detail the story as it progresses from one scene to another."[10]

Another tale Ed heard from Tex Wilson, "The Giant Flounder," also employs a combination of concrete details and ludicrous imagery to create a vivid picture:

> Another time Tex and his wife was up on Terry's Flats, and Tex said

the water was so deep on top of the Flats that that "33" wasn't even kicking up muddy water. And the way the old boat bogged down it had to be four feet of water for it not to kick up any muddy water, and all at once, why the boat stalled out. He said he didn't know of any logs or anything up on Terry's Flats, and his wife raised up and looked over the bow, and she said, "Good Lord, Tex, cut that thing off and come here and look a minute." Went up there and looked, and there was a big old flounder with his back just flush with the top of the water, and they'd beached on that flounder's back. And while he was looking there, his wife said, "Look, Tex, look." And there across the side, and there was another one swimming off the same size. Well, I got curious to see how big those flounders were, and I didn't go through school far enough to figure it out in algebra or advanced math, so I had to get me a pencil and a tablet. Well, I wore out that pencil and started on another one. The way I got to figuring on that, a flounder that's twelve inches long, eight inches wide, and he'll weigh about three-quarters of a pound. So I took it from there and just before I wore the—filled the tablet full of figures, and I had two pencils already wore out, why, I got the, uh, as near as I could, the exact weight and the size of that flounder. The flounder was forty-eight feet long and thirty-two feet wide, four feet thick, and weighed thirty thousand pounds. So I figured that was a pretty nice flounder.

The tale uses concrete details—Terry's Flats, depth of water—and concrete dialogue—"Good Lord, Tex." The dialogue especially makes the story effective by involving the listener on an immediate level. And once you are involved, the storyteller has set you up for the surprise of the ludicrous imagery—a fish so big that a boat grounded on it, and it took two pencils and an entire tablet to figure out its size. Ed makes a final humorous point by using understatement right after the biggest exaggeration. The fish "weighed thirty thousand pounds. So I figured that was a pretty nice flounder."

The Florida fish story quoted at the beginning of this chapter also uses ludicrous images including one at the end as a punchline. The fish photograph tale seems to be a tall tale with joke structure. I collected several other versions of "The Fish Photograph" from fishermen along the coast but none of the other Ed Bell tales. The shorter, jokelike tale seems to be more popular. Ed Bell recognized this when he said, "People don't have time to listen to stories much anymore. There's new ones coming on all the time that are, uh, keen little cutters and shorter, you know, and they like a short one with a heavy punch line." This has not stopped Ed Bell from

telling the longer tall tales; the circumstances of his bait camp provide him with the opportunity to continue the tradition.

Point of view is another important consideration in the style of tall tales.[11] This becomes especially noticeable in versions of the same tale told at different times. For instance, Ed told "The Thick Fog" in 1967 and 1971, using a different point of view each time.

(1967) However, this old boy down in Houston that was fishing there, he done pretty good. They got to talking about fishing. They decided to go fishing early the next morning. One fellow says, "I'll be around to pick you up in my fishing flivver." Says, "O.K." Says, "You call me when you get ready." Said, "You better be ready when I get there." The next morning he heard a horn honking and a blowing and cutting up. Said he looked at the clock and it was three o'clock. Stuck his head out the window, "What in the world's the matter?" "Man, you ain't ready to go fishing?" "He said, "I got everything ready, but I'm not up yet. I never thought you'd be going this early." "Aw," he said, "it's foggy, it's awful foggy. We got to get an early start." However, "We got in the model T and started off towards Galveston. And we drove and drove and drove and drove. And the only way we could travel was to look out the window down at the stripe on the pavement. It was pretty dim, hard to see." So he said, "Finally this fellow pulled out to the side and said, 'Okay, get your rod and reels out and let's go fishing.' " He said, "My golly, I couldn't see no water, it looked to me like it was just old marsh grass out there." Said, "This fellow he got his bait and put on there and he sailed it out there." Said, "I listened and listened for that old big sinker to splash. I never did hear no splash," said, "All at once he started struggling with it. It was a going around." And he said, "I kind of got around behind the car because I just knew he'd roped somebody's Brahma bull." He said, "It come out of there, and he had an eight-pound redfish." He said, "Man, you talk about somebody getting excited, my fingers all turned to thumbs." He said, "It didn't take me too long though to get a bait on, and I sailed her out there." And he said, "We caught twenty-five of those big redfish." Says, "That fog lifted and we was fifteen miles from the bay; we'd been fishing in that fog bank."

(1971) We didn't, uh—we weren't in a boat then, we were staying in Houston then. And a friend of mine wanted to go fishing, so I told him that I'd wake him up in the morning, I'd blow the horn when I come by ready to go, and I had the old Model T car, so I went by there at

two o'clock in the morning, blowing my horn. And he finally stuck his head out the window, and he says, "What in the world's all the racket about out there?" "I told you I'd blow the horn. Let's go." Neighbors began to cut up about all that horn blowing. So he come out there with his rigging, got in there, we took off. And he said he's the one who knew exactly where to fish. Well, I didn't; we'd been going on down towards Galveston somewhere and that's all I knew of. And he says, "Hey, pull off right here." And I pulled off; there's old salt bunch grass. We's driving about five miles an hour; the fog was so heavy I couldn't do no driving. Couldn't nobody see anything; once in a while see the stripe in the pavement. So I pulled off to the side of the road. He got out there, got his old dead shrimp bait out, and he placed one on his hook, and he says, "Ain't you going to fish?" I says, "Man, I ain't never fished in a place like this, and I don't expect to start now." So he just heaves his old heavy sinker off across the country. And I listened and listened. I never did hear any splash. So I, well, we'll just wait and see what happens. About that time, why his old rod just folded up. I said, "Oh my goodness, he's caught a Brahma bull just sure as the world." He fought around there for a good little bit, and brought it in, and it was an eight-pound redfish. I couldn't believe my eyes, and I started trying to rig up, and he'd done hooked another one by the time I got that—got rigged up. I heaved her out there, and I hooked one too, and we was fighting those fish in just like nobody's business, and it got about eight or nine o'clock. We caught fifteen or twenty big reds, and the fog lifted, and we was ten miles from the bay; we'd been fishing in a fog bank. (Motif X1156, X1651, X1651.3.1)

The 1967 version is told in the third person and the 1971 in the first person. The 1971 account is a more effective story because the use of first person adds to the sense of immediacy. "I couldn't believe my eyes, and I started trying to rig up." Ed must realize the importance of the first person, because he even slips it into the 1967 version. He uses the third-person narrative as a frame and within it tells much of the story in the first person. "Said, 'I listened and listened for that old big sinker to splash. I never did hear no splash,' said, 'All at once he started struggling with it.' " The use of "said" instead of "he said" tends to de-emphasize the third-person pronoun. The tone of his voice drops on "he" at times; other times Ed leaves it out entirely. The de-emphasis of "he" strengthens the first-person identification so that he can achieve immediacy even within a third-person frame. Several folklorists have noticed shift of point of view in oral storytelling.[12]

The significance of point of view becomes even more apparent in a com-

parison of two versions of "The Wonderful Hunt," one of the most widely collected folktales in America, which has been traced back in print to *The Farmer's Almanack* of 1809.[13]

(1967) One of the biggest fishing yarns that got scattered around, I don't even remember who scattered it around. It mixed up a little fishing, hunting, well, I guess you'd call it a whole lot of both. This old boy had a double-barreled shotgun, muzzle-loader. And his daddy let him use it; it wasn't really his; it belonged to his daddy and it had belonged to his grandpa. He decided he'd go duck hunting, goose hunting, or something or other. And he went down on the river, and there was a little island out there in the middle of the river, and he waded out and got on this island. And he sat there and he sat there, and he'd been there for seven days, and he hadn't seen a thing to shoot at. So about the time he was getting really discouraged, why he heard something go *quaaaack, quack, quack, quack*. Looked up the river and there come a thousand ducks come swimming down that river. "By golly," he said, "I'm going to get me a bunch of ducks." About that time he heard *honk, honk, honk, honk*. Looked down the river, and there come a thousand geese swimming up the river. "Ahh," he said, "I don't know whether to kill goose or duck." About that time, he said, moving around a little bit must stirred something. Said all that time he'd been setting there a great big old diamondback rattlesnake crawled up there right between his legs and coiled up. He said that thing started buzzing and he looked down there and that thing was getting ready to strike. He said, "My golly, what can I do?" And about that time he heard something *rrruff*, and he looked over his shoulder and there come a grizzly bear right up behind him. And he said, "I been working that load down in this gun, every day I'd repack it with that ramrod." And he said, "It had diamonds on it, and my father wouldn't take a fortune for that diamond-studded ramrod." Said, "That old gun wasn't worth much." "Well," he said, "About that time I's just feeling so blue and I knew I's gone every way in the world. And I looked up and there stood a big old buck deer over on the other side of the river, and that was the biggest deer I'd ever seen in my life." Said, "He must've had forty-five or fifty points." Said, "I'd never seen a deer like that," said, "I'm going to die happy, I'm going to kill that deer." He said, "I got so excited I forgot to take that ramrod out of that gun." Said, "I just pulled both triggers at him." And he said, that thing exploded; one barrel went up the river and killed those thousand ducks, and the other barrel went down the river and killed those thousand geese;

the ramrod went over and killed that deer. The trigger guard broke off and cut that snake's head off, and the stock flew over his shoulders and killed that grizzly bear. He said, "My golly, the first thing I had to do was get those ducks and geese to keep them all from washing away. So I waded out there to gather them up, and every time I'd come out with a load of ducks and geese my boots was full of fish. I had a time stacking all that stuff up. Then I took in after this deer, go over there and see how he's getting along." Said, "I knew it'd killed him dead because he dropped in his tracks. My golly, that was the ramrod that'd killed him. I've lost my daddy's ramrod and I'll never get over it; he'll whip me every day as long as I live, or as long as he lives, anyway. All at once I noticed that I could tell where the thing had gone because it hit these big trees and just split them wide open. My golly, I believe I could trail it. Maybe I can find it. Pretty soon I knew I's getting close to it because it didn't split a tree, it kind of glanced off of it. I looked out there, and there it was sticking in a tree, and it had nine quail pinned on it."

(1971) Well, uh, we used to live on the river out there, and it was a pretty nice river, wasn't real big, but big enough that it had an island in the center of it. Well, my daddy had an old muzzle-loading shotgun outfit that he had inherited from his daddy. And it had a silver, solid silver ramrod with diamonds in the handle of it, and he wouldn't take nothing for it. He was offered thousands of dollars, but he wouldn't take anything for that ramrod. And, uh, so I talked him out of the use of that gun, and I went down and got on this island. I'd been there six days waiting and I hadn't seen a duck nor goose, nothing to shoot at at all. And all at once—I was so cramped, got tired of sitting there, and I heard something *quack, quack, quack*, and I looked up, and there came a thousand ducks swimming down that river. And blame, I started to shoot, and I heard something *honk, honk, honk*. So I looked down the river and there came a thousand geese swimming up the river. I says, "I don't know whether to get ducks or geese. Which one oughta I get, which one oughta I get?" And I'd squirmed around a little bit, I reckon, and I disturbed a rattlesnake—a big old diamond-back had crawled up there and coiled up right between my legs, and he started buzzing. I throwed my head back and said, "Oh, my golly." And I kind of looked over my shoulder, and there was a grizzly bear coming across there to get me; he didn't like me cutting up and that snake buzzing and everything, and he was coming after me. Well, I just looked straight ahead, and across the river was about a twenty-

eight-point buck over there, biggest horns I'd ever seen; I'd never killed a deer like that in my life, and it's the last one I'll ever kill; I'm just going to shoot him, that's all there is to it. This old gun was a double-barreled outfit, and, ah, I'd been tamping on it; every once in awhile you have to repack the loads on those muzzle-loaders, and I'd repacked it, and I forgot to take that ramrod out. I says, "Well, I'm going to get that deer." And I just pulled down on it, both barrels, be sure and get him. And that ramrod being in there caused the gun to blow up. That trigger guard went down and cut that rattlesnake's head off. One barrel went up the river and killed the thousand ducks, and the other barrel went down the river and killed those thousand geese. The stock flew over my shoulder and hit the grizzly bear in the head and killed him, and the deer dropped right where he was. And I looked around there, and I says, "Oh, my golly, I forgot that ramrod in that gun. Dad'll skin me if it's the last thing, he's going to skin me." I went over to see my deer anyway, and I looked and there was a great big old tree just split wide open there. I went over to look at it to see why it was split open, and that ramrod had gone right through the center of it. I says, "I'll be darned. After it killed that deer, I guess the ramrod must have killed him, why it went through that tree." So I just followed it right down through the woods, and there was several trees split open, some of them laying out in the ground; I could tell where the ramrod went through it. Pretty soon, aw man, I was tickled, I looked ahead, and there was that ramrod sticking in the tree. And I went over there and there was eighteen quail pinned on it. So I went back over there, and I says, "Well, I better gather up ducks and geese." Well, I had on hip boots, and they were great big old top hip boots. I got out there, and I got over the tops of those hip boots, got excited and didn't pay any attention to how deep the water was. And I gathered up these ducks and geese, and piled them all that I could get on the shore. And when I got out there, why, my boots was full of fish. (Type 1890, 1890B, 1890D, 1894, 1895; Motif X1110, X1111, X1112, X1124.3)

A major result of first-person point of view is a deeper involvement in the action of the story for the teller and the listener.[14] Both versions of "The Wonderful Hunt" are, in effect, in first person; the 1971 version is first person throughout, and the 1967 version contains first person within a third-person frame. The imperative for the teller to become involved can be seen more clearly in the 1967 version, as Ed gradually slips into first person as the story progresses: " 'Ah,' he said, 'I don't know whether to kill goose

or duck.' " Finally, by the end of the story he was completely into first person; at the most exciting part he became totally involved and lost all distance. When he started to use first person the effect was to go inside the mind of the character and give his thoughts: "By golly, I'm going to get me a bunch of ducks." He continued this interior monologue in the first person, which lessened the distance and made the listener more sympathetic with the character. We are shown his father's feelings about the ramrod: "my father wouldn't take a fortune for that diamond-studded ramrod." And we get his feelings about his dangerous situation: "I's just feeling so blue and I knew I's gone every way in the world." This kind of sympathy for the character could not be achieved in third person because it would distance us too much from him. It would not be as effective to say, "He was just feeling so blue and he knew he was gone." The sympathy with the character at his low point is important to the overall impact of the tale because it is the sudden reversal of his fortune which is the source of much of the humor in the story. From his despair at losing his life, he suddenly is saved, retrieves the precious ramrod, and receives bounty beyond his wildest dreams.

The entire "Wonderful Hunt" story was told as a personal experience in 1971; he did not preface the story with the comment about it being "one of the biggest yarns," which distances him from it; he began immediately with, "Well, uh, we used to live on the river out there. . . ." Why did he use first person more consistently in the second storytelling session? It might seem from a comparison of texts alone that he had developed as a storyteller in the four years, but Ed Bell's commentary reveals that the reasons were more complex. In 1976 I asked him what was the usual way for him to tell these stories. "Whichever way happens to strike you best. Now, uh, if, uh, I can tell it about somebody else, and I think it's the right time to tell it about somebody else, I'll do it. But if I want to kind of plug for myself, I'll tell it about myself (*laughs*). I get a little selfish about that." Thus, point of view in the tall tales is determined by the context of the storytelling event. I asked him about the specific circumstances in which he would shift point of view, and several reasons came out.

> And another thing that caused me to want to use my name in it is that I had some nephews and nieces. [*To his wife*] Grandnieces, wasn't they, honey? And they were coming down to Indianola, and, ah, so when they got pretty close to Indianola, one of them says, "I believe I can smell salt water. Yes it is." And one of the kids says, "I smell Uncle Ed's water." And the other one says, "Mmm, I smell Uncle Ed's fish." Well it made me feel pretty good then. Made me feel a little bit

possessive. So if I can get people to thinking that I'm just a little bit akin to this stuff, and a part of it, why not tell it as if I am a part of it?

Being a part of the coastal setting which is described in many of the tall tales is important to Ed's occupational and storytelling identity. Telling the stories in the first person unifies him with his surroundings and adds to his public reputation as "*the* Ed Bell."

This explains the use of first person but still does not fully explain the occasional use of third person. Ed was a little hesitant to give the full explanation because it is more personal. "I've always been self-conscious about making a—well, I wouldn't want to say an ass—making a kind of fool of myself. And if you make a fool of a person that's unknown, no one knows it, never heard of him, imaginary person, it doesn't really hurt him." The imaginary person is "this old boy" in "The Wonderful Hunt," and Ed uses him in those contexts where telling the story about himself might be embarrassing. The first time I recorded Ed Bell in 1967, I was a stranger to him, and he did not feel comfortable enough with me to tell the longer, more involved tall tales in the first person. However, the artistic demands of the stories determined that he would shift into first person within the third-person frame.

The use of first-person narrative relates to another stylistic device, the narrative persona. In the longer tall tales, Ed employs a character as the narrator who is consistent in his attitudes and reactions to his surroundings and his experiences. This persona can be seen in "The Wonderful Hunt," "The Thick Fog," and in another tale he told only in 1971, "The Bee Tree":

> No, that happened, though, up near Luling. We had pretty good woods up in there, and some of the trees were big. But I staggered up on a tree one day that I didn't believe. I couldn't believe my eyes. I couldn't —it just looked like the tree took up nearly the whole country. And I heard a terrific roar, and I looked up, and about forty feet high was a big old knothole about a foot across, and was a solid roll of bees just working out and in there, honey bees. So, man, I just knew that I'd get a big bunch of honey out of that. So I went off and rounded up a bunch of my friends; we got about ten of us with axes. We loaded up the wagon with all the tubs and old barrels, dishpans, everything we could find because we didn't know how much honey we might get out of it. We went down there with our camp outfit too. We was going to camp there while we chopped it down. So we chopped on it three days, and the old boy says, "You know, I can hear something that sounds like an echo of us chopping on this tree." I says, "You know, I've never been

on the other side of that tree. I'm going to walk around there and see what it is." Why, it took quite a while to walk around it. Got over there and there was ten other fellows chopping on the other side. They'd found the bee tree too. So we all lit in together, decided to pool our chopping and get it down. So we all got busy, and we chopped the tree down, and a big branch [stream] there about twenty-five foot deep, around a hundred feet across, pretty steep sides on it. And this tree fell across that, and it just busted open, and a big limb broke open at the same time, and there was squirrels in that limb, and a roll of grey squirrels big as a flour barrel rolled out of that hollow limb for three days and nights. I don't know where they all went after that, but there sure was a lot of squirrels in there. So we looked, and this tree was split open and turned over into halves, and there was small knotholes on the sides of it; in different places, but they's there. So there's just streams of honey coming out of there, so we told that other bunch that they could catch out of one stream and we'd catch out of the other. And we filled everything we had, all the barrels, dishpans, tubs, and everything we could find we filled with honey. And it was still running out of there. And these other guys didn't have near as much as we did to catch honey with. So we took off. They went one direction, and the way we went we had to cross this branch [stream] about five miles further down. We got there, and it hadn't rained in six months, and that thing was bank full. And we wondered what in the world had happened, and we got up there and looked at it, and it was pure honey running down that branch. It's done filled that branch plumb full. We had to wait two days for it to run down so we could cross and get home. (Type 1960G; Motif X1282, X1471, X1471[a], X1471.1)

The character of the narrator in this story and in two other long tales is consistently naïve and innocent; he views his natural surroundings with awe and wonder. When the narrator spots the deer in "The Wonderful Hunt," the sense of awe is apparent. "Well, I just looked straight ahead, and across the river was about a twenty-eight-point buck over there, biggest horns I'd ever seen; I'd never killed a deer like that in my life . . ." His injection of "My golly" at exciting parts of the tales also indicates his wonder. In "The Thick Fog," when his friend catches a fish in the fog, he says, "I couldn't believe my eyes." And when he sees the big bee tree, his reaction is the same wide-eyed wonder: "But I staggered up on a tree one day that I didn't believe, I couldn't believe my eyes. I couldn't—it just looked like the tree took up the whole country." The innocent persona is important in other American cultural expressions; he can be seen in the writings

of Thoreau and Whitman, in the character of Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, and in some of Hemingway's characters.[15] The American innocent has many cultural and philosophical implications, but in terms of his manifestations on the folk level, he expresses an American attitude toward the bounty and the incredible qualities of nature which are part of an American cultural myth.

The American myth of bounty links the tall tale to the folk idea of "unlimited good" which was discussed in relation to buried treasure legends in Chapter 6.[16] Both tall tales and buried treasure legends reflect "unlimited good" through fantasy, but in different ways. Since the legends are believed, they represent unlimited good in a historical sense. Fantasy takes place in the mind of the listener—"I could go out and find that treasure"—but the fantasy is grounded in what the listener considers a real possibility. Tall tales are not believed, so that the projection of unlimited good is directly through fantasy. No one who hears the tall tales really believes that a tree or fish as big as the ones described really exists. The huge size of natural objects and the incredible quantities of game are symbolic of the American folk idea that the United States contains limitless natural resources and countless opportunities to prosper from them. This idea has been part of our folklore, popular culture, and literature from colonial times to the present; the tall tale is but one of many symbolic expressions of it. Within the tall tale, the naïve narrator-persona becomes symbolic of the American everyman. He stands for a national point of view of awe and wonder at the natural resources available on the North American continent.

The tall-tale narrator-persona is an important part of Ed Bell's storytelling technique, and it relates directly to the other devices of point of view and ludicrous imagery. The innocence and naïveté of the narrator spring directly from his perception of the absurd images. The images are so unbelievable that it would take a totally naïve person to believe them, and the narrator does believe them within the realm of the story. The listener sees the absurd image through the eyes of the naïve narrator-observer, which creates a comic effect. The humor comes from the incongruity of juxtaposing an innocent, awed outlook with the ludicrous image. For instance, in "The Bee Tree" the narrator's wonder at the size of the tree is juxtaposed with the ludicrous image of twenty men chopping it down. The device of the tall-tale image is enhanced by the tall-tale persona.

It is important to realize that the storyteller, Ed Bell, and the narrator are not the same. Ed uses the traditional persona as his narrator; he assumes the role of the innocent while telling the story, but in reality he has different attitudes. The teller of tall tales knows that he is lying, but

the persona who narrates the tales in the first person is an innocent who exists in a realm of fantasy, a world where fish swim in fog, a single shot kills a multitude of game, and honey fills up streambeds. The cynical storyteller does not believe in this fantasy, but he uses a character who does to narrate the tall tale.

At one time in American history, the tall tale was told as a hoax for initiating greenhorns; this was especially true on the frontier.[17] In the frontier situation the tall tale was told as true in order to fool the newcomer, even though the teller knew it was not true. At some point the hoax would be revealed to the greenhorn, everyone would laugh at his expense, and he would no longer be a gullible outsider; he could then pull the joke on a newer arrival. The situation in which Ed Bell tells his tall tales would seem to provide a likely opportunity for the continuation of this initiation function. He is an insider in the community, and he confronts outsiders, sport fishermen from the cities, every day. However, the context of his storytelling as I observed it and as he described it indicates that the initiation function no longer exists. The sport fishermen are not gullible enough to fall for the hoax. Many of them are already aware of Ed Bell's reputation as a yarn-spinner and liar. The reaction of his audience is amusement, not awed belief. As Ed described it, the audience reaction was also sarcastic because of the fantastic quality of the tales.

Thus, the tall tales now function for entertainment and to reflect the folk idea of unlimited good. The audience approaches the tale in much the same way they would approach the reading of a novel, with the "willing suspension of disbelief." They know it is not true, but they enjoy being momentarily pulled into the fantasy realm of the tall tale.[18] The complex relationship of the devices of concrete detail, ludicrous imagery, point of view, and narrative persona function together to involve the listener in the fantasy.

Any American audience would react this way, not just fishermen. The tall tales are part of fishermen's folklore in that a fisherman told them, most of them are about fishing, and they are set on the coast. "The Wonderful Hunt" is popular all over America, but Ed Bell has adapted it to the coastal region by having it take place on an island. The only tall tale he told which remains land-locked is "The Bee Tree," which he sets in central Texas. Hundreds of sport and bay fishermen must have heard his tall tales down through the years; I hope some new raconteur has heard them and will keep them alive in tradition.

Conclusion: The Imaginative Force in Folklore

The folklore of fishermen on the Gulf Coast of Texas expresses varied ideas and themes through many diverse forms. Fishermen's folklore is further diversified because of the two distinct groups of fishermen, who have different bodies of folklore. For all of this, I still see unifying qualities in fishermen's folklore. The unity can best be understood after the major differences are delineated.

Folklore is chiefly an occupational expression for Gulf fishermen and a regional expression for bay fishermen. Among sea fishermen, magic folk beliefs and associated legends are the folklore genres most closely tied to an occupational identity. The bay fishermen have a weak tradition of magic folklore, but they have a stronger narrative tradition than Gulf fishermen. Bay fishermen told more of the buried treasure legends and local character anecdotes, and the best storyteller on the coast was a bay fisherman. The greatest area of overlap of folklore between the two groups of fishermen was in empirical folk beliefs; Gulf and bay fishermen use weather signs and fishing aids. However, in general the two fishing communities are distinctly different.

The bay fishermen had a strong sense of regional identity in their folklore. Many of them are originally from Texas, and this supports their regionalism; they also have a Gulf Coast regional sense in their folklore. The buried treasure legends, local character anecdotes, and tall tales are all unmistakably stamped with an aura of the Gulf Coast region. All the treasure tales told by bay fishermen were set on the coast, and many tales had references to historical events and characters associated with the Gulf. The Taylor brothers' activities as described in the local character anecdotes were grounded in a coastal setting. The brothers were described as beach people whose main pastime was fishing in the bays and bayous along the coast. Their identity as nonconformists was shared by other beach residents

and was partially based on their isolation on the coast. All the tall tales except one were set on the Gulf Coast, and most had to do with fishing. The image of American bounty in the tall tales is applied specifically to the coastal region of Texas. It is on the coast that one can find a flounder so large that a boat can be beached on it and a fish so big that it can pull a boat. When Ed Bell set one tall tale in Florida, he was mock-apologetic about telling it because "it's running our fishing place down over here in Texas." Most of the bay fishermen had been on the Texas coast most of their lives, and their folk narratives reflect their sense of permanence.

The Gulf shrimpers, on the other hand, have migrated into Texas from other states on the Gulf and the Atlantic. Their folklore is linked to seafaring traditions from all over the world. This can be explained in historical, geographical, and functional terms. Fishermen often come from fishing families, so that occupational traditions are passed from generation to generation within the family. Fishing communities in America were settled by fishermen from the British Isles and the Scandinavian and Mediterranean countries. This established a tie to European fishermen's folklore. No matter in what location sea fishermen are pursuing their occupation, they face the same anxiety-causing hazards and uncertainties. Magic folk belief serves similar functions for sea fishermen in widely scattered areas. As with sea fishermen everywhere, Gulf fishermen's occupational identity is wrapped up in magic belief and legend.

As different as the two bodies of folklore are, there are some broad similarities. The folklore of bay and Gulf fishermen is concerned with the natural and the supernatural, reality and fantasy. There seems to be a belief in another realm of existence which balances the real, everyday world. This quality is expressed in different ways within various genres of folklore. In folk beliefs the empirical weather signs and fishing aids are part of everyday observable reality. A fisherman can see signs and aids working as he goes about his occupational life from day to day. He has a pragmatic attitude toward these beliefs in that he will reject those that do not work. Also, he will allow for variance in the accuracy of the signs and aids. The empirical folk beliefs are testable in terms of concrete natural phenomena. The fisherman observes the sun, the moon, the wind, the clouds, and the tide. All these natural phenomena make up his perception of everyday reality. The occupation of fishing places a man close to nature so that he cannot help but be aware of natural occurrences around him. He must also know as much about them as possible because his personal safety and occupational success depend on his knowledge of nature. Observations and knowledge about nature are accumulated over the years into traditional empirical beliefs.

The narrative folklore genre closest to empirical folk beliefs in its concern with the natural and the real is the local character anecdote. The stories about the Taylor brothers are based on observed personal experience. The subject matter is everyday activities—eating, sleeping, fishing, talking. The world described in the anecdotes is familiar and mundane. The humor comes from the deviant behavior of the characters, but it is still real and believable behavior. The anecdotes point out details of reality which are distasteful and not usually talked about—maggots, filth, dog excrement, physical wounds, and so forth. The stories remind the community of the unpleasant realities of everyday life. Local character anecdotes help the community to cope with the reality of the presence of deviant personalities. Extreme deviance is dealt with by society through institutions, but in small and isolated communities, deviance is handled in more informal ways, and oral narratives are part of the informal method of dealing with real societal problems.

Of all the kinds of folklore collected on the Gulf Coast, buried treasure legends seem to have the greatest mixture of fantasy and reality, of the supernatural and the natural. They are like empirical beliefs and local character anecdotes in that part of the narrative and its context is based on observed personal experience, but this is merged with supernatural warnings, ghosts, and the implied fantasy at the end that the treasure is waiting to make someone wealthy. Much of buried treasure lore is made up of accounts of evidence (markings on trees, gold coins on the beach, and physical landmarks) which ground the narratives in empirical reality. Even the most fantastic buried treasure legend is filled with concrete physical details and a sense of reality. Max Edwards' tale of "The Treasure at Los Palacios" contains references to real people and places, but it ends with a supernatural warning of lightning on a clear day. This supernatural occurrence could be thought of as a fantasy, and a psychological fantasy projection also exists in the story. When people hear of the existence of buried treasure in their own area, they will most likely imagine what it would be like if they found it. From a grounding in reality the stories move to an imaginative possibility for the future.

Magic folk beliefs also have contact with concrete reality, and their context is the everyday world, but their major reason for existence is their connection to the supernatural world. The objects and activities mentioned in magic beliefs are ordinary and familiar: suitcases, hatch covers, knives, coins, whistling, and leaving on Friday. These everyday objects and activities are usually part of the condition of magic beliefs; the extraordinary and unfamiliar part of the beliefs is in the result section: bad luck, accidents, death. It is in the connection between ordinary real things and

extraordinary luck that a leap is made from the natural world to the supernatural, from observable physical reality to the unseen and mysterious. There are many uncertainties and mysteries in a fisherman's life which he seeks to explain through superstitions. Why do some fishermen make better catches than others under the same conditions? Why on some boats does everything go wrong? Why during storms do some men lose their lives while others survive? The answers to these questions are outside the province of science and technology; the mysteries suggest that there is a supernatural explanation which humans cannot fully understand, but superstitions at least provide some tentative rules for dealing with the supernatural world. By doing certain things and avoiding others, fishermen feel they can better control their own fate.

Memorates about superstitious events are also mainly concerned with the supernatural, but, like the magic beliefs at their core, they are grounded in the real and natural. By definition, memorates are related to actual experience, so that the mixture of the real and the fantastic is to be expected. When a fisherman breaks a taboo, such as turning the hatch cover upside down, and something goes wrong soon afterward, such as his boat catching on fire, these concrete real experiences can be related as a narrative. The interpretation he puts on these natural events is what suggests the supernatural. If he sees causality between the breaking of the taboo and the misfortune, then he is offering a supernatural explanation. Some force which he cannot understand has figured in the misfortune which has occurred. A clue in the form of a traditional superstition is all the fisherman has to help him understand. There is somehow, he believes, a connection between objective reality, the hatch cover, and the unseen force which brought about the bad luck. The experience he describes in the memorate is a reminder to him of the constant presence of the supernatural force.

Since magic belief fabulates are more removed from actual experience, they have a stronger suggestion of the supernatural than memorates. Fabulates still have an air of reality to them, but the concrete details and real place names are more of a rhetorical device than a reflection of actuality. In several variants of the buying-the-wind fabulate, details about the boat and the people as well as place names are used, but the storytellers make it very clear that they only heard about the incident through tradition. Since the storyteller is removed from the event, this allows for a stronger emphasis on the supernatural, which comes through the severe punishment received for violating an interdiction. In the fabulates of fishermen the supernatural often appears in the form of a religious belief; the force which punishes transgressions is thought to be God. By making God the supernatural force, the fishermen can have a better understanding

of the mystery. Since most of them have organized religion as part of their background, labeling the supernatural force God makes it more familiar and enables them to understand it within an existing system of beliefs.

No matter what the force is called, the effects of the supernatural on human life are considered extraordinary and fantastic. In the fabulates, families die, a ship has constant misfortune, and lightning strikes a captain, all because of tampering with the supernatural. The more the story deals with the fantastic, the harder it is for people to believe, and this explains why some legends become fictional tales.

The differences between belief and fictional genres are important, of course, but the similarities are also significant. Magic fabulates are a belief genre and tall tales are fictional, but both have a contact with reality at their base. The tall tales of Ed Bell are set in specific locales, usually on the Gulf Coast; they have concrete details about boats, water, people, fish, and animals. After a basic sense of reality has been established, the stories gradually enter into fantasy. The storyteller becomes a part of the fantasy as a first-person narrator, and the listener is drawn into the fantasy by the imaginative devices used by the storyteller. This movement from the real to the unreal in the tall tales is parallel to the movement from the natural to the supernatural in magic fabulates. The fantasy realm is directly described in the tall tale, but the supernatural realm is only suggested in magic beliefs and related legends. Since the legends have a belief factor, this places a limit on the distance they can be removed from reality; but tall tales are told as fiction, which removes all barriers to flights of fantasy. Tall tales and legends differ in the degree of fantasy, but they are similar in their concern with the unreal. Both the fantasy of the tall tale and the supernatural realm of the magic legend transcend everyday experience; they go beyond the real and the natural; they are concerned with an unseen world, an imaginative world.

The same imaginative force is required to make the leap from the real to the fantastic as from the natural to the supernatural. What is called the supernatural in belief legends is also a fantasy realm. We use the term *fantasy* to suggest something totally removed from reality, and fantasy is thus usually associated with fictional genres such as märchen and tall tales. The term *supernatural* suggests a spiritual or mystical realm and religious beliefs in an afterlife. These are usually associated with belief genres such as myth and legend. Fantasy is an unreal world we do not believe in; the supernatural is an unreal world we do believe in or want to believe in. They are essentially similar; the differences lie in the attitudes toward them and the forms in which they are expressed.

Imagination is the human quality which relates fantasy to the super-

natural; both require the force of imagination to exist. Humans can verify objective reality through the senses, but a fantasy realm and a supernatural world cannot be perceived by the senses; they must be imagined. In magic folk beliefs, magic memorates, fabulates, and tall tales the substance and spirit of the expression depends on the imagination of the believer, the transmitter, and the storyteller. To make the leap from cause to supernatural effect in magic belief requires imagination.

Commercial fishermen lead a physically demanding life. Their work is hard, and they face many hazards and dangers. Their folklore reflects the physical qualities of their lives, but it also shows that their lives transcend the physical. The imaginative force of fishermen's folklore indicates their concern with a symbolic meaning to life. No one consistent meaning comes out of the folklore; in fact, the fishermen's attitude toward fantasy and the supernatural is ambivalent. The folklore does reveal a consistent use of the imagination to attempt to get meaning out of life. No final answers are found, but the folklore is evidence of the ongoing process of thinking, groping, wishing, fantasizing, and imagining the answers.

Appendix A: A List of the Magic Folk Beliefs

Magic beliefs are subdivided into taboos, omens, good-luck devices and customs, control devices and aids, and miscellaneous. These categories overlap in some cases, depending on the wording. Some taboos have related conversion rituals which are given after the appropriate taboo. Variant wordings have been added when significant. After each belief is the motif index number or numbers, where available, from Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*. This is followed by the number, if any, for corresponding beliefs in Wayland D. Hand, ed., *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions from North Carolina*, vols. 6 and 7 of *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*. Finally, the number of times a particular belief was collected on the Texas coast in 1967 is given.

TABOOS

1. And another thing, if you go on a boat and when you pick a hatch up and you turn it upside down, well that was hard luck too. Seventy times.
2. Whistling on the boat is bad luck. Motif C480.1; Brown 3467; nineteen times.
3. On a long trip, they won't leave on Friday. Brown 3462, 3721–3724; forty-two times.
4. One guy, he don't like to leave on Tuesday. Says it's bad luck. Motif N127.1; six times.
5. There's another thing most of the old fishermen won't do is harm a porpoise. They believe it's good luck. Motif C841.9, B473; Brown 7331; five times.
6. It's bad luck to harm a seagull. Motif E723.5; three times.
7. Same thing with seagulls and pelicans. We were taught not to harm them 'cause they never hurt anybody. One time.
8. I've heard that killing an albatross is bad luck. Motif C841.10.1; one time.
9. Take for instance sea turtles, soon as he found somebody had cooked a sea turtle, overboard it went. But he never told me why. Motif B177.3; six times.

10. Shaving, oh yeah, that's absolute; you don't shave on my boat. Motif C722.0.1; Brown 3468; two times.
11. Never start a trip on Sunday or you'll come in on Monday. Motif C631.1; Brown 3726; three times.
12. If you leave out in the morning, and forget something, and go back and get it, you'll have a bad day that day. Motif C833.3; Brown 3762, 3763; four times.
13. When you leave the dock and forget something and turn around and go get it, you have to make a cross, mark a cross on something. Motif C833.3; Brown 3762, 3763; one time.
14. Don't put a hat on the bunk. Brown 3238; two times.
15. Pick up a hammer and drive a nail on Sunday wasn't allowed by one captain. Motif C631; Brown 5023; two times.
16. Playing the cards when you're fishing; I don't believe in that either. One time.
17. I don't want no one to come on there with a funny book and sit in the galley and read the funny book. . . . When you look at a funny book, somebody's going to make fun of you. One time.
18. Dropping oil means bad luck on a boat. It wouldn't come out right if you did. One time.
19. On all the fishing boats out of Pensacola you can't throw a match down. One time.
20. He only has one belief. If you work on a net on Sunday, you'll tear it up on Monday. Motif C631; one time.
21. Before he picks up, he turns a certain way, and won't turn the other way. One time.
22. Those Greeks had a superstition. If you lost a shirt overboard, you'd have bad luck. Motif N135.3; one time.
23. Unless you've been around the horn, don't wet the windward, the weather side. Always on the leeward. Motif E29.6; one time.
24. They'll kill you if you stick a knife in that foremast. Motif D2142.1, Q221.4; Brown 3472; one time.
25. Never dock starboard side; always dock port side for good luck. One time.
26. If somebody stepped inside a coiled rope, they thought it was hard luck. One time.
27. Eating peanuts on the boat is hard luck. Two times.
28. Lot of them wouldn't throw a piece of bread overboard. One time.
29. I've had fellows who wouldn't let you turn the bread upside down. Motif C535; one time.
30. You never put a poling oar in the boat backwards. One time.
31. Change the name on the boat, and you couldn't get anybody to go out on it. Not unless you rebuilt it 90 per cent. They believed you changed the soul of the boat. They believed boats had souls. Motif N131.4; three times.

32. I can't catch fish on Sunday. Motif C631; Brown 7793; one time.
33. Don't never throw that first fish away. Every time you go fishing no matter what kind of fish he is. Brown 7816; two times.
34. I've heard that you don't head your shrimp in the Gulf or you won't catch any shrimp. One time.
35. If a man was hired on a boat, and he came on board with a black suitcase, they would turn him loose right then, and would tell him to get off the boat. All of the old fishermen always thought black suitcases was hard luck. Motif D1293.4; Brown 3737; forty-two times.
36. The old-timey fishermen won't carry any money with them when they go out on a trip. Mostly the snapper fishermen. Some even threw it overboard. Brown 7805; eight times.
37. A lot of fishermen take their wives on the boat, but they say it's bad luck. Eight times.
38. Captain Frizell don't want black rags on his boat. Motif 1293.4; one time.
39. He don't want anything painted black on his boat. You know a lot of times the mast is painted black; not his. Motif D1293.4; one time.
40. Some of them don't want you wearing black shoes. Motif D1293.4; one time. [Also, black slickers, one time.]
41. Some of them don't want a brown suitcase on board. Motif D1293; one time.
42. I've run two or three jinx boats, and I mean jinx too. Five times.
43. I'm a firm believer that a wrong name can jinx a boat. Two times.
44. It's bad luck to bring fruit on board. One man believed this. One time.
45. Every time she makes curtains for the boat, that's a sure sign that they are going to have trouble. So she stopped making curtains for the boat. One time.
46. You're never supposed to have an alligator billfold or alligator suitcase on board. One time.
47. They don't want a motor painted blue. And if they get a blue one, they call it gray. Motif D1293; One time. [Also, anything colored blue, one time.]
48. I don't know why, but there's a lot of Portuguese that don't like red on a boat. They'll turn it any other color, but they don't want any part of red. Motif D1293; one time.
49. A lot of them don't want a broom on the boat. Motif D1209.8; two times.
50. The average man won't let you bring a black cat on board. Motif D147.1.2.2; Brown 3813; four times.
51. Anything feathered was considered hard luck on a boat. One time.
52. And you can't have a parrot or a pet monkey on a boat. They thought it was bad luck. Brown 6923, 6989; two times.
53. They don't like a dog on the boat. One time.
54. You better not put a conch shell on the boat; if you do, you might as well get off. One time.

55. Lot of people wouldn't keep a sawfish bill on the boat. That was bad luck. But I see a lot of people nail them up in the cabin. One time.
56. My grandfather always told me that he would never have a menstruating woman on his boat because the oysters would open up and spoil. This is not a joke; it is something he took serious. Motif C141.1; one time.
57. *Alligator's* not allowed to be said on my boat. Motif C433.2; Twenty times.
58. Wives never wish their husbands "good luck" because this is bad luck. Motif C493.1; three times.
59. Up north, if you talk about the pig on the boat, they claim it's gonna be bad luck. Or if you talk about horses. Motif C430; two times.
60. If somebody asks you for fish when you go out, that's bad luck. One time.

OMENS

61. Bad luck on the first day out means bad luck the rest of the time. Brown 5985; one time.
62. They claim if a boat comes off the rails sideways when it was launched, that it was bad luck. One time.
63. If you have a bad start, you'll have a good ending. You know, I've seen that happen. Brown 5987; one time.
64. Some of them say if they steal something from you, and you don't know nothing about it, that's bad luck. One time.
65. If I dreamt where I'd catch shrimp, I'd do it. And always had good luck. Motif D1812.3.3; two times.
66. Poppa said he seen a woman on the boat, and then we had good luck Just a woman with big bushy hair he claimed. He'd come in with a big bad of shrimp and say, "I guess you know what I seen last night." I seen it one time. Well, we had good luck. It kind of made me feel funny. Motif M301.11; one time.
67. If you see a rat leave a boat, they claim—that goes back to sailing days—if a sailor saw a rat leave a boat, he wouldn't get on the boat. They knew that boat wasn't coming back. And there's truth to that; somehow those rats knew. Motif B757; Brown 3464; three times.
68. If a cat walks across the bow of the boat, he won't go out. Motif B147.1.2.2; Brown 3813; one time.
69. It's bad luck for a porpoise to be following in front of a boat, but I don't know why. One time.
70. And it's good luck when a porpoise meets you as you're coming in. Motif B173; Brown 7331; one time.
71. Sometimes there's a fish that makes a sound eating the seaweed on the bottom of the boat, and they make a noise like *onh, onh, onh.* That was a bad sign. They say that's a crazy superstition, but we followed it. One time.

72. When they see a loon bird sounding like he is saying "go home," this is a bad omen and they go home. Motif B143; one time.
73. When an albatross lights in your rigging, it means bad luck. Motif C841.10.1; four times. [Sometimes worded as "petrel."]
74. If a bird lit on your boat, it was bad luck because they knew you were in trouble even if you didn't know it yet. Motif B143.0.6; Brown 5295, 5296, 5288, 3463; three times. [Specifically, a dove, meaning death, one time.]
75. If a bird lights on your boat out at sea, that's good luck. Motif B147.2; one time.
76. When I used to fish in Florida there was a little bird like a canary. He used to fly out to the boat. He was the best lucky charm I ever saw. We'd catch more fish and everybody would be happy and the weather would be good. Motif B147.2; one time.
77. The first shrimp that I see on the first drag, if he jumps out of the net, I'll have a bad day all day. Brown 7817; one time.
78. If you go floundering, and you get anchored, and you see a big one right away and gig him, put him in the boat and come on back in because you ain't going to catch another one that night. One time.
79. When you catch seahorses in the bag, don't throw them away especially on a Friday because they are a good-luck sign. On a Friday you better keep it. Motif B144; one time.
80. There's supposed to be a catfish that has a cavity in his head with something like a pebble in it, and if anyone finds one of these catfish, he has fantastically good luck. Motif B144; one time.

GOOD-LUCK DEVICES AND CUSTOMS

81. Some of them have horseshoes tacked on the boat upside down for good luck. Motif D1561.1.3; Brown 2963; six times.
82. Throwing money in the compass box is supposed to bring good luck. Motif D1288; two times.
83. I've seen coins nailed to the very top of the mast, but I didn't know what it was for. Motif D1288; two times. [Also coins driven into the bits, one time.]
84. They used to throw a dime down in the sounding lead for good luck. Motif D1288; two times.
85. A red cloth is waved to scare evil spirits away by old Italians. Some still do it. Motif D1293.1; five times.
86. The Greeks come into the business and they wouldn't have anything but blue. They gotta have some blue on their boats. One time.
87. Sometimes they think a curse has been put on a boat, so they sprinkle salt

on the boat. They would cuss because they were mad. Motif D1039.2; Brown 5640; one time.

88. Garlic is used to drive away evil. Motif D1385.2.8; one time.
89. I carry palm leaves for good luck on Palm Sunday. Two times.
90. Poppa had a picture of Christ nailed on the cross he always carried on the boat. Brown 5821; two times.
91. A lot of them will hang a bottle of holy water up, and they won't go without it either. Motif D1242.1.2; one time.
92. The Catholics, especially if they're having trouble at home, they take a crucifix on board with them. Motif D1719.6; one time.
93. I took my beads along with me on a long trip. Motif D1070.1; one time.
94. Always coil your rope clockwise. Three times.
95. I had a cat on board with me for nine years. He sure did bring me good luck. Motif B181.1; Brown 7152; two times.
96. Those fishermen in North Carolina used to believe in the conjure bags that they'd wear. Got it from the slaves I guess. Motif D1274.1; Brown 3453, 5544; one time.
97. They put a silver dollar or a silver fifty-cent piece or a dime, something silver, under the mast for good luck. Motif D1288; twenty-five times.
98. They used to put a figurehead under the bow stem for good luck. We used to have a figurehead of a woman on our boat. Three times.
99. On sailing vessels, I believe they put a silver spike in the keel, or a golden spike. Motif D1285; one time.
100. There's one old belief that you lay your keel with the bow to the east. Two times.
101. I had one fellow tell me one time you ought to paint a boat the color of a dollar bill, white, green, and black, if you wanted to make money. One time.
102. Busting a champagne bottle on the boat when launching brings good luck. Eight times.
103. They have parties when they launch a boat. Four times.
104. A lot of them get a priest to bless the boat before it's launched. Five times.
105. They have a blessing of the fleet in Palacios and in Freeport. In Alabama, they have a big blessing. Nine times.

CONTROL DEVICES AND AIDS

106. If you whistle on the boat, they'll fire you. They claim you're whistling the wind in. . . . Motif D2142.1.6; Brown 3474; twenty-four times.
107. They have an old saying that you could buy wind. Whatever amount of wind you want, nickel, dime, quarter's worth. You turned your back and threw it overboard. . . . Motif D2142.1, Q221.4; Brown 3471; fifteen times.

108. French harp, well, you can blow up a wind with it. Motif D2142.1; two times.
109. They throw pennies overboard to keep the wind from blowing. Buying off the wind. Motif D2142.2; Brown 3471; one time.
110. Some of them used to walk up and scratch the mast when they wanted the wind to blow. Motif D2142.1; Brown 3472; one time.
111. They'd stick a knife in the mast pointed in the direction they wanted the wind to blow. Motif D2142.1, Q221.4; Brown 3472; nine times.
112. Fellow used to work for us at the freezing plant. There was a storm brewing up in the Gulf, and he said you could set up an axe pointed this way, and it would break up the storm. Funniest thing was that it worked to his satisfaction. Motif D1541.2, D2141.1; Brown 7001; one time.
113. Pissing off the bow, that's supposed to make the wind blow. Motif D2142.1; one time.
114. When "Horse Mackerel John" had a load he'd ask Jesus Christ to make bad weather so none of the rest of them could catch any. Motif D2141.0.7.1; one time.
115. If you see a waterspout and you make the sign of the cross with your hand, it will go away. Brown 5821, 7001, 7002; nine times.
116. Had to use a white-handled knife. It was supposed to cut the waterspout. Use scripture and holy attitude and make the sign of the cross. They said "tail of the rat" so that you might not harm any human beings. Brown 5821; one time.
117. I've heard some of them say that you could take a shotgun and shoot into a waterspout and break it up. Motif D2142; Brown 7001, 7002, 5770; five times.
118. He said he'd crawl up the mast and stick a knife in it and say a few Greek words, and the waterspout'd go away. Motif D2142, D1543; one time.
119. They say make the Jewish star, mark it down, to get rid of a waterspout. Motif D2142; three times.
120. If you get seasick you're supposed to drink salt water. One time.

MISCELLANEOUS BELIEFS

121. During Lent season you can't hardly find the fish, and that's the best market for fish. Motif C630; one time.
122. The porpoise will push a body to shore. That's an old belief among the fishermen and the people of the coast. Motif H1233.6.3; twenty-nine times.
123. One thing is true is that the porpoises will keep the sharks away from your boat. Motif H1233.6.3; Brown 7331; eight times.
124. They also believe a porpoise will lead you through the passes. If you're in

a strange place, they'll find the channel. Motif H1233.6.3; Brown 7331; one time.

125. We used to catch a lampur, that's the Spanish name, and it was supposed to be poisonous. So we would put a silver coin, a shilling, in the fish, and if it turned black, then it was no good. Motif D1317.0.1; one time.
126. When the codfish or certain kinds of fish are feeding in shallow water and a storm is coming, they swallow stones as ballast to keep them in shallow water. After the storm, they claim they turn their poke inside out to wash out all the sand and pebbles. One time.
127. What's on land is also in the sea. Every animal on land is represented by a duplicate in the sea. You have catfish, seahorses, rabbit fish, sea robin—which has much the same color as the bird—cull fish, and the rabbit fish looks like a land rabbit. And the porcupine fish. One time.
128. The fish that Jesus planted in the Sea of Galilee is still marked by the thumb-print. It's called the spot fish, and there are lots of them in the Gulf. Motif A2221.3; one time.
129. In a sand dollar, if you break them up, the little white things inside that look like doves are supposed to be the Bible story of the doves on Noah's ark. One time.
130. Some of them figure a shrimp can't swim north, only south. One time.
131. Jubilee day is when the crabs all come into shore. They have that over near Mobile Bay. They said the fish and the crabs will jump right out of the water onto the beach. They used to say they could hear them clicking, and the next morning the beach was full of crabs. One time.

Appendix B: A List of the Empirical Folk Beliefs

Empirical beliefs are divided into weather signs and fishing aids. Each belief is followed by motif and Brown numbers, where available, and by the number of times the item was collected on the Texas coast in 1967.

WEATHER SIGNS

132. A circle around the moon means bad weather. Brown 6151, 6152; twenty-nine times.
133. A circle around the moon meant bad weather. How many stars in the circle meant the number of days of bad weather. Brown 6151; one time.
134. That's [ring around the moon] a sign of bad weather. The closer the ring is, the closer the bad weather, the tighter the circle. Brown 6151; one time.
135. A halo around the moon meant rain the next day. Brown 6151; six times.
136. A circle around the moon was a sign of a hurricane. Brown 6151; one time.
137. Circle around the moon and one side is open. It's going to blow from that direction. Brown 6151, 6152; one time.
138. A circle around the moon usually meant dry weather, you won't get rain. Brown 6151, 6152; one time.
139. Whenever the new moon is tilted, you can look for wet weather that month. If it is straight, you can look for dry weather. And this would hold up. Brown 6536, 6538; five times.
140. When the moon stands up it means good weather. When it's like this [points down] it's bad. Bad weather and you'll stay in your bunk. Three times.
141. I have used an almanac. The almanac mostly goes by the phases of the moon. Seven times.
142. Every full moon you have a weather change. Brown 6199; three times.
143. Hurricanes come a week or ten days after the full moon. I've never seen one that didn't come then. One time.
144. Two days after a full moon you'll have bad weather, especially in the winter. Two times.
145. The weather's usually better on the full moon. One time.

146. We would never have a hurricane on the dark of the moon. One time.
147. If the rain comes in the first quarter of the moon, the next month it will come about the same time. One time.
148. If you've got bad weather before a full moon, it'll get worse up until the full moon, and then gradually get better after. The same with good weather. Brown 6199; one time.
149. That moon, when it comes up real red, that usually indicates a storm and squalls. One time.
150. We didn't use the moon too much, but when the moon gets cloudy it's a sign of wind the next day. One time.
151. When I look at the moon, and it's kind of soft, you can see it ain't going to be cool, it's going to be warm, something like that. One time.
152. Red sun in the morning, sailors take warning;
Red sun at night, sailors' delight. Brown 6130; sixteen times.
153. Rays circle from the sun is an indication of bad weather. Brown 6146; one time.
154. About sun dogs—it looks like part of a rainbow on the side of the sun. Three days afterwards we would have some bad weather. Brown 6157; seven times.
155. When the sun sets kind of red, it meant bad weather. Brown 6149; sixteen times.
156. When the sun is a big orange ball, it means clear weather. Two times.
157. When the sun was setting, and there was gold-colored clouds, you could expect bad weather for fishing. Brown 6939; three times.
158. In the morning when the sun is red as fire you're going to get wind. Brown 6938; four times.
159. Sunset clear as a bell,
Easterly weather sure as hell. One time.
160. That's an old—that's way back. You have a clear sunset, you'll have clear weather. A red sunset and you'll have wind. That used to be the only guide we had for years. We go by that. Brown 6223; two times.
161. Sun went behind a cloud at sunset. Sun went into the bag; weather be bad tomorrow. This was for sure in winter. Brown 6148, 6483–6495; two times.
162. If the sun goes down with a green glare, it means good weather. Three times.
163. The higher the sun comes up the harder the wind blows, and when it sets they die down. Two times.
164. Mackerel skies and mare's tails
Makes lofty ships lower her sails. Brown 3475; one time.
165. The high clouds. Lots of times there's clouds way up high in streaks. We call them mare's tails, and they mean that the wind is gonna blow. Brown 6944; fourteen times.
166. Mackerel sky,
Not three days dry. Five times.

167. I can tell the weather every day from the clouds. There's what we call a thunderhead, which is very important on the coast. They can crop up and cause a tremendous amount of wind. Brown 6516; two times.
168. The high and the low cloud. If you have a low breeze and the clouds aren't moving above, it won't blow below. But if they do move above, then it'll blow down below. Brown 6952; one time.
169. You see the skud clouds and look for a wind change. One time.
170. Sometimes clouds look like a bunch of wool, cold weather. One time.
171. "Pop" Hanson called them "coffee pots in the air." And you can get the goddamnest blow you ever seen. Little old bubble-looking things. One time.
172. When we see a cloud that looks like a rainbow. We better head into port because that black rainbow means trouble. One time.
173. Any night if you watch close enough, if you see shooting stars, the wind will blow in the direction they're going. Brown 6958, 6957; one time.
174. Seeing a certain star meant the wind would come. One time.
175. Around Florida when the sky is clear, the stars are more bright and there are no clouds, it means that the weather is going to be real bad within 24 or 48 hours. One time.
176. When you see the stars kind of sparking that's a sign of wind too. Seven times.
177. Some of them say by the Milky Way. The way it's laying you can tell the way the wind's going to blow. Brown 6955; one time.
178. Squally weather, your stars won't be quite as bright. Brown 6560; one time.
179. A rainbow at night, sailors' delight.
A rainbow at morning, sailors take warning. Brown 3476, 6124–6127; seventeen times.
180. When a hurricane [storm, northwester] is coming, there is a swell ahead of it. Ten times.
181. Way back there the old-timers used to count the time between each wave, and that way they knew when the hurricane was coming. Two times.
182. You know the tide is running fast to the north; that means we're going to have a southeaster; if it runs south, we're going to have a northeaster. That's Florida weather. One time.
183. Low tides is good weather; high tides is bad weather. Two times.
184. When the tide runs against the wind it means bad weather. One time.
185. The only thing I watch. If that Gulf gets like a piece of glass, you better watch it. At night if it's just like looking in a mirror, brother, you better get ready to go. Brown 6935; four times.
186. You'll never find no settled weather when the wind backs up, when it goes anti-clockwise. One time.
187. If it blows out of the north and switches back to the west it was bad weather. One time.
188. A light nor'wester wind means there's a storm coming up. Five times.

189. We could predict a norther over there when we got a strong southwest wind, and it would happen in ten or twelve hours. One time.
190. Rain before wind, take sails in.
Wind before rain, let them hang. One time.
191. Take bad weather. Whichever way the wind blows the longest, that's the way it's coming from. One time.
192. A lot of times the wind will blow real hard and then get puffy. That's good sign that it's going to turn calm. One time.
193. Anytime in the summertime, if we have a norther, and it turns real cool and then hot and sultry in the afternoon, then a bad storm will come within two or three days. Two times.
194. In 1932, in August, we had a severe hurricane. We had the same weather then as we are having now, hot and dry. We might have a hurricane this year because the weather is similar. One time.
195. Three fogs and you could look for a norther. Old-timers said fog on three days meant a norther was coming. Brown 6593; four times.
196. As the farmer used to say, "Rain before seven, clear before eleven." Brown 6221; one time.
197. And you can tell how it was going to blow by the sharks twisting in the air. That was a sign of wind. And it would happen that way too. Fifteen times.
198. The porpoise jumps a lot. Certain times he jumps different from when he's playing. When he jumps straight, you watch and the next day the wind will come from the direction he is jumping. Thirteen times. [*Direction* of wind mentioned only one time.]
199. But right before a norther, a porpoise will lift up and pop his tail on the water, and the way he pops his tail is the direction the wind's going to blow. One time.
200. You could also tell when a norther was coming because the mullet would start jumping south. Brown 6774; six times.
201. When they, sharks and porpoise, are hungry and bite your nets, they say it's going to blow. Four times.
202. When a northeaster is coming the shrimp turn red. Five times.
203. There's probably going to be some rainy weather when the shrimp are trying to climb out on shore. Used to think it meant a hurricane; now it means a radical change in the weather. One time.
204. If the shrimp jump around when they were dumped on deck, it mean bad weather. That happened a few weeks ago. One time.
205. There's lots of that stuff you can watch. If you dump a bunch of crabs on board and them fellows is mean, the weather'll be bad. Three times.
206. Some people claim, it's like anything else you know, they claim that if a bird lights on your boat that you're going to have bad weather. Motif B143; Brown 3463; two times.
207. When the scissortail or storm bird comes across the Gulf, you can look out for bad weather. Motif B143; ten times.

208. A loon in the wintertime, when he makes his cry, you can look for a change in the weather sure. Motif B143; three times.
209. Albatrosses are bad-weather birds. Motif C841.10.1; two times.
210. Water turkey will holler just like a man, and you'll get some weather. Motif B143; one time.
211. When you see six or more crows in a bunch you'll have bad weather. Motif B146; Brown 6187; one time.
212. You can tell when you're going to have high winds because the gulls will go up real high and start circling. They know the boats are coming in. Motif B146; Brown 6193, 6730, 6932; nineteen times.
213. The way we figured it out, we'd see the seagulls coming into land. That means bad weather was coming. Motif B146; Brown 6193, 6730, 6932; ten times.
214. When the seagulls are swirling and squawking, that's a pretty good indication that there's going to be bad weather. Motif B146; three times.
215. When the seagulls are hungry and eating up everything, there's going to be bad weather. Motif B146; three times.
216. Most usually when the birds are down washing themselves, then you're going to have bad weather. Motif B146; one time.
217. In the wintertime we could tell when a norther was coming when the ducks and geese flocked in here. Motif B146; Brown 6188; one time.
218. One night the roaches started running out all over the boat, and all the lights were on. Not two hours later we had fifty-mile-per-hour wind. One time.
219. Cobwebs mean wind when the masts are full of it. Seven times.
220. Cobwebs on board mean fog. One time.
221. If the smoke from them plants comes out and lays down, it's going to be bad weather. If it goes straight up, it'll be good. I learned this from watching it. Most of the ones who live here know this. Brown 6165, 6166; one time.
222. There's something about the oil-well flares burning. If it's a white flame, they'll have a wind tomorrow. If it's a red flame, they say it'll be clear, not much wind. One time.
223. If perspiration don't evaporate, you better watch out. One time.
224. I worked with a man we called the "walking barometer." And that man, he was a judge of the weather; it was in his bones. He used to walk back and forth on the deck and scratch his head, and we'd say, "We better get out our slickers." Brown 6642; one time.

FISHING AIDS

225. A fisherman's moon is a full, clear moon. Brown 7745, 7746; twenty-one times.

226. When there's no moon the fishing is best. The fish are full on a full moon. Twelve times.
227. Moon's in the west,
The fishing's the best.
Moon's in the east,
Fishing the least. Brown 7756; one time.
228. When the moon was in the west was when we caught the best shrimp. One time.
229. On the rise of the moon the fish are hungry; waning moon they are not. One time.
230. The first quarter is best for shrimping. The shrimp move with the moon. One time.
231. Three before and three after is seven days of either the full moon or the new moon. There's one day in that seven that the fish would not bite. One time.
232. Three or four days before and three or four days after the full moon we had more soft shrimp. One time.
233. Also we have noticed the moon has a lot of effect on oysters. If you plant them on a certain time of the moon, they won't grow as well. One time.
234. My grandmother said the crabs shed on the moon. I think the new moon. One time.
235. I used to hear my dad say he'd go by the big dipper; if it showed bright stars, he could go fishing. If it was kind of hazy, he couldn't. One time.
236. Evening red and morning grey,
We're sure to have a fishing day.
Evening grey and morning red,
Sure to bring rain down on your head. Brown 6122, 6123; one time.
237. Shrimp know the weather's coming. They disappear when it's lightning and thundering. Brown 7779–7781; two times.
238. Sometimes just before bad weather you catch very good fish. Seven times.
239. Just after a bad spell of weather, after a norther, you can go after the fish because it tends to bunch them. You can sack them up after a norther. Seven times.
240. The first cold norther and they're gone. Three times.
241. The weather's just like a farmer. If you don't get your rain, you won't get the fish in the bays. Brown 7774; two times.
242. This little cool spell caused them to slow down. For the surface fish, the hot weather causes them to come to the top and bite. Cold weather they go back down. Brown 7795; one time.
243. Water'd be too hot and the fish would be hard to find, so they'd fish at night. Brown 7749, 7799; one time.
244. In the daytime when the water is clear the fish stay out of the shallow water. When it's muddy, that's when we catch fish. Two times.
245. Now-days they got to have clear water to go fishing. One time.

246. The tides has a whole lot to do with it. Certain tides you catch the fish. I done my best fishing on the low tides. Two times.
247. High tides is best for fishing. Two times.
248. Any time you get a big groundswell the shrimping is real good. One time.
249. Any time the wind goes northeast you might as well put your tackle up. Brown 7754; four times.
250. It's hard to fish the way it is now, blowing. A little light wind is the best. Brown 7751; one time.
251. Fishing's the best when the wind's in the west. Down here it's not worth a damn. Brown 7756; one time.
252. When the wind shifts it sometimes makes the shrimping better. One time.
253. You need an inshore wind for trout. One time.
254. The fall of the year . . . it's good [fishing]. Six times.
255. And the spring of the year it's good [fishing]. One time.
256. The summer is the fishing time of the year. One time.
257. Early in the morning and late in the evening is the best time for fishing. Brown 7796; one time.
258. In the daytime we watched the birds. The birds are after the little shrimp. That's what you call the school fishing. Brown 7784; five times.
259. I used to look for . . . a slick. I would never pass that area because it was an indication of shrimp. One time.
260. Trout let out an oil that smells like watermelon. Four times.
261. Ocean would be red, that'd be little bitty shrimp, and you might as well not fish because the shrimp are feeding on top. One time.
262. The theory was that if you fished white shrimp at night, in the daytime they weren't going to be there. One time.
263. Where you don't have them brown shrimp, you ain't going to have white shrimp. One time.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. John J. Poggie, Jr., and Carl Gersuny, "Risk and Ritual: An Interpretation of Fishermen's Folklore in a New England Community," *Journal of American Folklore* 85 (1972): 67. The authors' sources for these statistics are Office of Merchant Marine Safety, *A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Alternative Safety Programs for U.S. Commercial Fishing Vessels* (Washington, D.C., 1971) and U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 91st ed. (Washington, D.C., 1970).
2. A. W. Moffett, *The Shrimp Fishery in Texas*, p. 16.
3. Ibid., p. 3.
4. Ibid.
5. Ernest G. Simmons and Joseph P. Breuer, *The Texas Menhaden Fishery*, p. 8.
6. Moffett, *Shrimp Fishery*, p. 3.

1. MAGIC BELIEFS

1. Alan Dundes, "Brown County Superstitions," *Midwest Folklore* 11 (1961): 28.
2. Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Religion: An Anthropological View*, p. 107.
3. Ibid., p. 168.
4. This corresponds to "coping functions." See Theodore Rosenthal and Bernard J. Siegel, "Magic and Witchcraft: An Interpretation from Dissonance Theory," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 15 (1959): 146.
5. Bronislaw Malinowski, "The Role of Magic and Religion," in *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, ed. William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, p. 91. The same phenomenon was also noticed among farmers in New Mexico by Evon Z. Vogt in *Modern Homesteaders: The Life of a Twentieth-Century Frontier Community*, pp. 63–64.
6. Wallace, *Religion*, pp. 260–261.
7. Malinowski, "Role of Magic," p. 89.

8. Rosenthal and Siegel, "Magic and Witchcraft," p. 144.
9. Talcott Parsons, "Religious Perspectives in Sociology and Social Psychology," in *Reader in Comparative Religion*, ed. Lessa and Vogt, p. 123; Clyde Kluckhohn, "Myths and Rituals: A General Theory," in ibid., p. 146; Vogt, *Modern Homesteaders*, p. 339; Arthur J. Bachrach, "An Experimental Approach to Superstitious Behavior," *Journal of American Folklore* 75 (1962): 7; John J. Poggie, Jr., and Carl Gersuny, "Risk and Ritual: An Interpretation of Fishermen's Folklore in a New England Community," *Journal of American Folklore* 85(1972):66–72. At least one anthropologist disagrees with the anxiety-ritual theory. See Alfred L. Kroeber, *Anthropology*, p. 604.
10. Wallace, *Religion*, p. 177.
11. Vogt, *Modern Homesteaders*, p. 77.
12. Ibid., pp. 63–64.
13. Kroeber, *Anthropology*, p. 603.
14. Vogt points out a similar cost in water witching (Evon Z. Vogt, "Water Witching: An Interpretation of a Ritual Pattern in a Rural American Community," in *Reader in Comparative Religion*, ed. Lessa and Vogt, p. 340).
15. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, "Taboo," in *Reader in Comparative Religion*, ed. Lessa and Vogt, p. 109.
16. George C. Homans, "Anxiety and Ritual: The Theories of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown," in *Reader in Comparative Religion*, ed. Lessa and Vogt, p. 117.
17. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, p. 31.
18. Vogt, *Modern Homesteaders*, p. 180.
19. Rosenthal and Siegel, "Magic and Witchcraft," p. 152.
20. Dundes, "Brown County Superstitions," p. 32.
21. Fletcher S. Bassett, *Legends and Superstitions of the Sea and of Sailors: In All Lands and at All Times*, p. 438.
22. Richard M. Dorson, *Buying the Wind: Regional Folklore in the United States*, p. 22.

2. MAGIC BELIEF LEGENDS

1. See C. W. von Sydow, *Selected Papers on Folklore*, pp. 73–74, 87.
2. Ibid.
3. Reidar Christiansen, *The Migratory Legends*.
4. Ibid., p. 4.
5. Wayland D. Hand, "Status of European and American Legend Study," *Current Anthropology* 6 (1965): 441.
6. Linda Dégh, "Processes of Legend Formation," in *IV International Congress for Folk-Narrative Research in Athens: Lectures and Reports*, ed. Georgios A. Megas, p. 80.

7. Lauri Honko, "Memorates and the Study of Folk Beliefs," *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 1 (1964): 5–19.
8. Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, "The Memorate and the Proto-Memorate," *Journal of American Folklore* 87 (1974): 230–231.
9. Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, "Legend and Belief," in *Folklore Genres*, ed. Dan Ben-Amos, pp. 103–109.
10. Ibid., pp. 104–107.
11. Robert A. Georges, "The General Concept of Legend: Some Assumptions to to be Reexamined and Reassessed," in *American Folk Legend: A Symposium*, ed. Wayland D. Hand, pp. 1–19.
12. Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*; Alan Dundes, *The Morphology of North American Indian Folktales*, pp. 153–170.
13. Daniel Barnes, "Some Functional Horror Stories on the Kansas University Campus," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 30 (1966): 305.
14. Bess Lomax Hawes, "*La Llorona* in Juvenile Hall," *Western Folklore* 27 (1968): 153–170.
15. Alan Dundes, "Structural Typology in North American Indian Folktales," in *The Study of Folklore*, ed. idem, pp. 213–214.
16. Fletcher S. Bassett, *Legends and Superstitions of the Sea and of Sailors: In All Lands and at All Times*, pp. 445–446.
17. Honko, "Memorates," p. 10.
18. Dégh and Vázsonyi, "Legend and Belief," p. 112.
19. Honko, "Memorates," p. 18.
20. Ibid., p. 11.
21. Dégh and Vázsonyi, "Memorate and Proto-Memorate," p. 232.
22. Honko, "Memorates," p. 13.
23. Christiansen, *Migratory Legends*, p. 5.
24. Horace P. Beck, *The Folklore of Maine*, p. 202.
25. Bassett, *Legends and Superstitions*, pp. 343–344.
26. Hand, "Status of Legend Study," p. 443.
27. Dégh and Vázsonyi, "Memorate and Proto-Memorate," p. 231.
28. Ibid.
29. Richard M. Dorson, *Buying the Wind: Regional Folklore in the United States*, p. 22.
30. Honko, "Memorates," p. 13.
31. Max Lüthi, "Aspects of the *Märchen* and the Legend," in *Folklore Genres*, ed. Dan Ben-Amos, p. 24.

3. EMPIRICAL BELIEFS

1. Alan Dundes, "Brown County Superstitions," *Midwest Folklore* 11 (1961): 28.

4. FORM, TRANSMISSION, AND CHANGE OF FOLK BELIEFS

1. Fletcher S. Bassett, *Legends and Superstitions of the Sea and of Sailors: In All Lands and at All Times*, p. 143.
2. Richard M. Dorson, *Buying the Wind: Regional Folklore in the United States*, p. 32.
3. Alan Dundes, "Brown County Superstitions," *Midwest Folklore* 11 (1961): 28.
4. Michael Owen Jones, "Folk Beliefs: Knowledge and Action," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 31 (1967): 305.
5. Dundes, "Brown County Superstitions," p. 29.
6. Bassett, *Legends and Superstitions*, p. 433.
7. Ibid., pp. 144–146.
8. Dorson, *Buying the Wind*, p. 31.
9. Bassett, *Legends and Superstitions*, pp. 443–446.
10. Dorson, *Buying the Wind*, p. 31.
11. Ibid., p. 28.
12. Bassett, *Legends and Superstitions*, p. 134.
13. Ibid., p. 240.
14. Dorson, *Buying the Wind*, pp. 32–36.
15. Bassett, *Legends and Superstitions*, pp. 101–147.
16. Ibid., p. 32.
17. Ibid., pp. 144–146.
18. Ibid., pp. 45, 48, 52, 127, 132.
19. Wayland D. Hand, ed., *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions from North Carolina*, vols. 6 and 7 of *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, ed. Newman Ivey White.
20. Bassett, *Legends and Superstitions*, p. 8.
21. Clifford Geertz, "Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example," in *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, ed. William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, p. 501.
22. Evon Z. Vogt, *Modern Homesteaders: The Life of a Twentieth-Century Frontier Community*, p. 77.
23. Dorson, *Buying the Wind*, p. 32.
24. Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*, trans. H. M. Wright, p. 77.
25. Vogt notes a similar pattern in the absence of water witching among Indians (Evon Z. Vogt, "Water Witching: An Interpretation of a Ritual Pattern in a Rural American Community," in *Reader in Comparative Religion*, ed. Lessa and Vogt, p. 341).
26. Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 45.
27. Bassett, *Legends and Superstitions*, p. 120.
28. Ibid., pp. 144–145.
29. Ibid., pp. 127–128.
30. Ibid., pp. 243–245.

31. Ibid., p. 446.
32. Dundes, "Brown County Superstitions," p. 28.
33. Elsie Clews Parsons, *Folk-Lore of the Sea Islands, South Carolina.*
34. Ibid., p. 211.
35. Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, p. 244.
36. Theodore Rosenthal and Bernard J. Siegel, "Magic and Witchcraft: An Interpretation from Dissonance Theory," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 15 (1959): 143.
37. Geertz, "Ritual and Social Change," p. 501.

5. FOLK BELIEFS IN ETHNIC GROUPS

1. Newbell Niles Puckett, *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro*, p. 45.
2. Carla Bianco, *The Two Rosetos*, p. 87.
3. Phyllis H. Williams, *South Italian Folkways in Europe and America*, p. 144.
4. Clifford Geertz, "Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example," in *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, ed. William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, p. 501.
5. Ibid.
6. Theodore Rosenthal and Bernard J. Siegel, "Magic and Witchcraft: An Interpretation from Dissonance Theory," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 15 (1959): 164.
7. Ernest G. Simmons and Joseph P. Breuer, *The Texas Menhaden Fishery*, p. 3.
8. Ibid., p. 8.
9. Puckett, *Folk Beliefs*, p. 404.
10. Ibid., p. 325.
11. Elsie Clews Parsons, *Folk-Lore of the Sea Islands, South Carolina*, p. 211.
12. Puckett, *Folk Beliefs*, p. 235.
13. Ibid., p. 476.
14. Geertz, "Ritual and Social Change," p. 501.

6. BURIED TREASURE LEGENDS

1. Gerald T. Hurley, "Buried Treasure Tales in America," *Western Folklore* 10 (1951): 197–216.
2. J. Frank Dobie, ed., *Legends of Texas*, p. 3.
3. J. Frank Dobie, *Coronado's Children*, pp. 306–332.
4. Hurley, "Buried Treasure," p. 199.
5. Ibid., p. 197.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 199.
8. Ibid., p. 200.

9. Alan Dundes, "Folk Ideas as Units of Worldview," *Journal of American Folklore* 84 (1971): 93–103.
10. George M. Foster, "Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good," *American Anthropologist* 67 (1965): 296.
11. Ibid., p. 307.
12. George M. Foster, "Treasure Tales and the Image of the Static Economy in a Mexican Peasant Community," *Journal of American Folklore* 77 (1964): 40.
13. Dundes, "Folk Ideas," p. 96.
14 Ibid., p. 97.
15. Hurley, "Buried Treasure," p. 197.
16. Ibid., p. 204.
17. Dundes, "Folk Ideas," p. 97. Emphasis added.
18. Hurley, "Buried Treasure," p. 197. Emphasis added.
19. Ibid., p. 200.
20. Dobie, *Coronado's Children*, pp. 319–323.
21. Hurley, "Buried Treasure," p. 200; Benjamin A. Botkin, *A Treasury of New England Folklore*, pp. 533–534; Stith Thompson, ed., "Folk Tales and Legends," in *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, ed. Newman Ivey White, vol. 1, p. 692.

7. LOCAL CHARACTER ANECDOTES

1. Herbert Halpert, "Definition and Variation in Folk Legend," in *American Folk Legend: A Symposium*, ed. Wayland D. Hand, p. 51.
2. Linda Dégh, "The Belief Legend in Modern Society," in *American Folk Legend*, ed. Hand, p. 67.
3. Sandra K. D. Stahl, "The Local Character Anecdote," *Genre* 8 (1975): 284.
4. Linda Dégh, "Folk Narrative," in *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, ed. Richard M. Dorson, p. 70.
5. Ibid., p. 78. The "current narrative" concept is from Herman Bausinger, "Strukturen des Alltäglichen Erzählens," *Fabula* (1958): 239–254.
6. Ibid.
7. Richard M. Dorson, "Legends and Tall Tales," in *Our Living Traditions*, ed. Tristram Potter Coffin, p. 158.
8 For a complete listing, see Richard M. Dorson, "A Note on Sources for Anecdotes of Local Characters," in idem, *Folklore: Selected Essays*, pp. 175–176.
9. Levette J. Davidson, " 'Gassy' Thompson—and Others: Stories of Local Characters," *California Folklore Quarterly* 6 (1946): 339–349.
10. Dorson, "Legends and Tall Tales," pp. 158–164.
11. Stahl, "Local Character," pp. 283–302.
12. Dorson, "Legends and Tall Tales," p. 163.

13. Edwin M. Schur, *Labeling Deviant Behavior: Its Sociological Implications*, p. 3.
14. Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, p. 9.
15. Edwin M. Lemert, *Human Deviance, Social Problems, and Social Control*, pp. 68–69.
16. Dorson, "Legends and Tall Tales," pp. 159–163.
17. Schur, *Labeling Deviant Behavior*, p. 24.
18. Robert A. Dentler and Kai T. Erikson, "The Functions of Deviance in Groups," *Social Problems* 7 (1959): 101.
19. Ibid.
20. Schur, *Labeling Deviant Behavior*, p. 102.
21. Dentler and Erikson, "Functions of Deviance," p. 101.
22. Mody C. Boatright, *Folk Laughter on the American Frontier*, p. 61.
23. Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, p. 141.
24. Ibid., p. 142.
25. Richard Dorson notes that the local character can be a trickster (*Folklore*, pp. 97–98).
26. Goffman, *Stigma*, pp. 141–142.

8. TALL TALES

1. Linda Dégh, "Folk Narrative," in *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, ed. Richard M. Dorson, pp. 53–83.
2. Daniel J. Crowley, *I Could Talk Old Story Good: Creativity in Bahamian Folklore*; Richard M. Dorson, "Oral Styles of American Folk Narrators," in *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok, pp. 27–51; Ruth Finnegan, *Limba Stories and Storytelling*.
3. Gustav Henningsen, "The Art of Perpendicular Lying," trans. Warren Roberts, *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 2 (1965): 180–219.
4. Mody Boatright, *Folk Laughter on the American Frontier*, pp. 95–105; Jan Brunvand, "Len Henry: North American Münchausen," *Northwest Folklore* 1 (1965): 11–19; Kay L. Cothran, "Talking Trash in the Okefenokee Swamp Rim, Georgia," *Journal of American Folklore* 87 (1974): 340–356; Herbert Halpert, "John Darling: A New York Münchausen," *Journal of American Folklore* 57 (1944): 97–107; William Hugh Jansen, "Lying Abe: A Tale-Teller and His Reputation," *Hoosier Folklore* 7 (1948): 107–124; Richard C. Lunt, "Jones Tracy: Tall Tale Hero," *Northeast Folklore* 10 (1968): 5–75; Vance Randolph, *We Always Lie to Strangers: Tall Tales from the Ozarks*; Russell Reaver, "From Reality to Fantasy: Opening-Closing Formulas in the Structures of American Tall Tales," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 36 (1972): 369–382; Roger Welsch, *Shingling the Fog and Other Plains Lies: Tall Tales of the Great Plains*.

5. Richard M. Dorson, *American Folklore*, pp. 44–45.
6. Robert A. Georges, "Toward an Understanding of Storytelling Events," *Journal of American Folklore* 82 (1969): 313–328.
7. Boatright, *Folk Laughter*, p. 97.
8. Ibid., pp. 97–98; Dorson, "Oral Styles," pp. 34–37; Lunt, "Jones Tracy," p. 17.
9. Kay L. Cothran sees a parallel structure in a form she calls "whoppers" (Cothran, "Talking Trash," p. 345).
10. Richard S. Tallman, " 'You can Almost Picture It': The Aesthetic of a Nova Scotia Storyteller," *Folklore Forum* 7 (1974): 127.
11. My analysis of point of view is partially based on the literary theories of Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*.
12. Dorson, "Oral Styles," p. 34; Linda Dégh, *Folktales and Society: Story-Telling in a Hungarian Peasant Community*, p. 182; Robert D. Bethke, "Storytelling at an Adirondack Inn," *Western Folklore* 35 (1976): 133.
13. Dorson, *American Folklore*, p. 45; idem, "Legends and Tall Tales," in *Our Living Traditions*, ed. Tristram Potter Coffin, p. 168.
14. Lunt, "Jones Tracy," p. 20.
15. Tony Tanner, *The Reign of Wonder: Naivety and Reality in American Literature*.
16. Alan Dundes, "Folk Ideas as Units of Worldview," *Journal of American Folklore* 84 (1971): 93–103.
17. Boatright, *Folk Laughter*, pp. 67–81.
18. Cothran, "Talking Trash," p. 346.

Bibliography

Aarne, Antti, and Stith Thompson. *The Types of the Folktale*. Folklore Fellows Communications, no. 184. Helsinki, 1961.

Bachrach, Arthur J. "An Experimental Approach to Superstitious Behavior." *Journal of American Folklore* 75 (1962): 1–9.

Barnes, Daniel. "Some Functional Horror Stories on the Kansas University Campus." *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 30 (1966): 305–312.

Bassett, Fletcher S. *Legends and Superstitions of the Sea and of Sailors: In All Lands and at All Times*. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1885.

Baughman, Ernest W. *Type and Motif-Index of the Folktales of England and North America*. Indiana University Folklore Series, no. 20. Bloomington, 1966.

Beck, Horace P. *Folklore and the Sea*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1973.

———. *The Folklore of Maine*. Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1957.

Becker, Howard S. *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: The Free Press, 1973.

Bethke, Robert D. "Storytelling at an Adirondack Inn." *Western Folklore* 35 (1976): 123–139.

Bianco, Carla. *The Two Rosetos*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974.

Boatright, Mody C. *Folk Laughter on the American Frontier*. New York: Collier Books, 1961.

Booth, Wayne. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Botkin, Benjamin A. *A Treasury of New England Folklore*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1947.

Brunvand, Jan. "Len Henry: North American Münchausen." *Northwest Folklore* 1 (1965): 11–19.

Carey, George. *A Faraway Time and Place*. Washington and New York: Robert B. Luce, 1971.

Christiansen, Reidar. *The Migratory Legends*. Folklore Fellows Communications, no. 175. Helsinki, 1958.

Cothran, Kay L. "Talking Trash in the Okefenokee Swamp Rim, Georgia." *Journal of American Folklore* 87 (1974): 340–356.

Crowley, Daniel J. *I Could Talk Old Story Good: Creativity in Bahamian Folklore*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966.

Davidson, Levette J. " 'Gassy' Thompson—and Others: Stories of Local Characters." *California Folklore Quarterly* 6 (1946): 339–349.

Dégh, Linda. "The Belief Legend in Modern Society." In *American Folk Legend: A Symposium*, edited by Wayland D. Hand, pp. 55–68. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.

———. "Folk Narrative." In *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, edited by Richard M. Dorson, pp. 53–83. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

———. *Folktales and Society: Story-Telling in a Hungarian Peasant Community*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969.

———. "Processes of Legend Formation." In *IV International Congress for Folk-Narrative Research in Athens: Lectures and Reports*, edited by Georgios A. Megas, pp. 77–87. Athens, 1965.

Dégh, Linda, and Andrew Vázsonyi. "Legend and Belief." In *Folklore Genres*, edited by Dan Ben-Amos, pp. 93–123. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976.

———. "The Memorate and the Proto-Memorate." *Journal of American Folklore* 87 (1974): 225–239.

Dentler, Robert A., and Kai T. Erikson. "The Functions of Deviance in Groups." *Social Problems* 7 (1959): 98–107.

Dobie, J. Frank. *Coronado's Children*. New York: Literary Guild of America, 1931.

———, ed. *Legends of Texas*. Publications of the Texas Folklore Society, vol. 3. Austin, 1924.

Dorson, Richard M. *American Folklore*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959.

———. *Buying the Wind: Regional Folklore in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964.

———. *Folklore: Selected Essays*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972.

———. "Legends and Tall Tales." In *Our Living Traditions*, edited by Tristram Potter Coffin, pp. 154–169. New York: Basic Books, 1968.

———. "Oral Styles of American Folk Narrators." In *Style in Language*, edited by Thomas A. Sebeok, pp. 27–51. New York: The Technology Press of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1960.

———, ed. *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

Dundes, Alan. *Analytic Essays in Folklore*. The Hague: Mouton, 1975.

———. "Brown County Superstitions." *Midwest Folklore* 11 (1961): 25–56.

———. "Folk Ideas as Units of Worldview." *Journal of American Folklore* 84 (1971): 93–103.

———. *The Morphology of North American Indian Folktales.* Folklore Fellows Communications, no. 195. Helsinki, 1964.

———. "Structural Typology in North American Indian Folktales." In *The Study of Folklore*, edited by idem, pp. 206–215. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965.

Festinger, Leon. *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957.

Finnegan, Ruth. *Limba Stories and Storytelling.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.

Foster, George M. "Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good." *American Anthropologist* 67 (1965): 293–315.

———. "Treasure Tales and the Image of the Static Economy in a Mexican Peasant Community." *Journal of American Folklore* 77 (1964): 39–44.

Geertz, Clifford. "Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example." In *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, edited by Willian A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, pp. 499–512. Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1948.

Georges, Robert A. "The General Concept of Legend: Some Assumptions to be Reexamined and Reassessed." In *American Folk Legend: A Symposium*, edited by Wayland D. Hand, pp. 1–19. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.

———."Toward an Understanding of Storytelling Events." *Journal of American Folklore* 82 (1969): 313–328.

Goffman, Erving. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963.

Halpert, Herbert. "Definition and Variation in Folk Legend." In *American Folk Legend: A Symposium*, edited by Wayland D. Hand, pp. 47–54. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.

———. "John Darling: A New York Münchausen." *Journal of American Folklore* 57 (1944): 97–107.

Hand, Wayland D. "Status of European and American Legend Study." *Current Anthropology* 6 (1965): 439–446.

———, ed. *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions from North Carolina*, vols. 6 and 7 of *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, edited by Newman Ivey White. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961, 1964.

Hawes, Bess Lomax. "*La Llorona* in Juvenile Hall." *Western Folklore* 27 (1968): 153–170.

Henningsen, Gustav. "The Art of Perpendicular Lying," translated by Warren Roberts. *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 2 (1965): 180–219.

Homans, George C. "Anxiety and Ritual: The Theories of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown." In *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, edited by William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, pp. 112–118. Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1948.

Honko, Lauri. "Memorates and the Study of Folk Beliefs." *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 1 (1964): 5–19.

Hurley, Gerald T. "Buried Treasure Tales in America." *Western Folklore* 10 (1951): 197–216.

Jansen, William Hugh. "Lying Abe: A Tale-Teller and His Reputation." *Hoosier Folklore* 7 (1948): 107–124.

Jones, Michael Owen. "Folk Beliefs: Knowledge and Action." *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 31 (1967): 304–309.

Kluckhohn, Clyde. "Myths and Rituals: A General Theory." In *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, edited by William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, pp. 135–151. Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1948.

Kroeber, Alfred L. *Anthropology*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948.

Lemert, Edwin M. *Human Deviance, Social Problems, and Social Control*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967.

Lunt, Richard C. "Jones Tracy: Tall Tale Hero." *Northeast Folklore* 10 (1968): 5–75.

Lüthi, Max. "Aspects of the *Märchen* and the Legend." In *Folklore Genres*, edited by Dan Ben-Amos, pp. 17–33. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976.

Malinowski, Bronislaw. *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1948.

———. "The Role of Magic and Religion." In *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, edited by William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, pp. 86–99. Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1948.

Moffett, A. W. *The Shrimp Fishery in Texas*. Austin: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 1967.

Parsons, Elsie Clews. *Folk-Lore of the Sea Islands, South Carolina*. Cambridge, Mass.: The American Folklore Society, 1923.

Parsons, Talcott. "Religious Perspectives in Sociology and Social Psychology." In *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, edited by William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, pp. 118–124. Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1948.

Poggie, John J., Jr., and Carl Gersuny. "Risk and Ritual: An Interpretation of Fishermen's Folklore in a New England Community." *Journal of American Folklore* 85 (1972): 66–72.

Propp, Vladimir. *Morphology of the Folktale*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968.

Puckett, Newbell Niles. *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926.

Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. "Taboo." In *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, edited by William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, pp. 99–111. Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1948.

Randolph, Vance. *We Always Lie to Strangers: Tall Tales from the Ozarks*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1951.

Reaver, Russell. "From Reality to Fantasy: Opening-Closing Formulas in the Structures of American Tall Tales." *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 36 (1972): 369–382.

Rosenthal, Theodore, and Bernard J. Siegel. "Magic and Witchcraft: An Interpretation from Dissonance Theory." *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 15 (1959): 143–167.

Schur, Edwin M. *Labeling Deviant Behavior: Its Sociological Implications*. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.

Simmons, Ernest G., and Joseph P. Breuer. *The Texas Menhaden Fishery*. Austin: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 1964.

Stahl, Sandra K. D. "The Local Character Anecdote." *Genre* 8 (1975): 283–302.

Sydow, C. W. von. *Selected Papers on Folklore*. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1948.

Tallman, Richard S. " 'You Can Almost Picture It': The Aesthetic of a Nova Scotia Storyteller." *Folklore Forum* 7 (1974): 121–130.

Tanner, Tony. *The Reign of Wonder: Naivety and Reality in American Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965.

Thompson, Stith. *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*. 6 vols. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1955–1958.

———, ed. "Folk Tales and Legends." In vol. 1 of *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, edited by Newman Ivey White. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1952.

Vansina, Jan. *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. Translated by H. M. Wright. Chicago: Aldine, 1965.

Vogt, Evon Z. *Modern Homesteaders: The Life of a Twentieth-Century Frontier Community*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1955.

———. "Water Witching: An Interpretation of a Ritual Pattern in a Rural American Community." In *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, edited by William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, pp. 327–341. Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1948.

Wallace, Anthony F. C. *Religion: An Anthropological View*. New York: Random House, 1966.

Welsch, Roger. *Shingling the Fog and Other Plains Lies: Tall Tales of the Great Plains*. Chicago: Swallow Press, 1972.

Williams, Phyllis H. *South Italian Folkways in Europe and America*. New York: Russell and Russell, 1969 (reprint of 1938 edition).